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IT IS NO WONDER

TO FIND A HOME FOR THE LOST AND DEER
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IT IS NO WONDER

A Story of Bohemian Life

BY

J. FITZGERALD MOLLOY

"In robe and crown the king stepped down
To meet and greet her on her way;
'It is no wonder,' said the lords,
'She is more beautiful than day.'"
TENNYSON'S *Beggar Maid*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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TO

MRS. EDWIN ELLIS

This Book is Dedicated.

IT IS NO WONDER.

CHAPTER I.

IN MARCUS PHILLIPS' STUDIO.

“**N**OW, Capri, sit quiet,” said Marcus Phillips, holding his brush in the air and looking meditatively from his canvas to the girl’s face before him.

“Ah! that is easier said than done, Marc,” she answered, familiarly, calling him by an abbreviation of his name. “You know I can seldom stay still—unless when I am thinking deeply.”

“Then you do think?”

"Such a question to ask. Do you believe I am always the child I appear?"

"I should be sorry if you were not," he said, dashing in some reds on the canvas.

"Ah! Marc," she said, after a slight pause, "there are times when I think and think until my head aches, and I lie awake at night wondering how my life will go on."

She tossed her head back as she spoke, and gave a quick, impatient sigh.

"There, you have moved again. You would test the patience of Fra Angelico himself, Capri. Turn your face more this way; that's better."

And, nothing loth, the artist went, and, taking her face between his hands, set it in the required position.

"Now about your life, Capri," he commenced. "Every man and woman has a destiny to fulfil; would it not be better to

permit Fate to work the riddle of your life out?"

"I don't know, Fate seems so slow."

"And you are so young."

"Not so very young," she answered, thoughtfully. "I am just eighteen; and besides, we who are born in the south mature quickly. I shall soon be what is termed a young lady, have to wear a long dress, brush my hair, and call you Mr. Phillips."

She laughed merrily as a child at this verbal picture of herself.

"I can never imagine you looking like a stolid piece of English humanity," said Marcus.

"From which may all the saints preserve me," she answered. Then, after a moment, she continued, in a lower and more serious tone, "I often wish, Marc, I was not such a Bohemian as I am. It's all very well and

pleasant when you are young, but here in England one must grow respectable and rich when one leaves one's teens, especially women."

"Must one?"

"Yes; not that I care so much about respectability, it always seems to make people dull and heavy and stupid; but then I do care for money."

"There are better things than money, Capri," he answered, laying down his brush suddenly and looking at her seriously.

"I don't know what they are," she replied, looking down.

"Perhaps not now, but you will some day."

"No, Marc, I never shall. Women are often older than men in thought and experience; believe me, there is nothing so good in life as gold."

She moved her head deliberately and

gazed out through the attic-window. Over the roofs of the opposite houses she could see the tops of a few green trees that grew in the neighbouring square.

"Few have known or know the want of money more than I, Capri; but I have not lived until now without discovering where its power stops short. It can buy many valuable things, I grant you, but never honest friendship, never true love."

He looked at her as he spoke, but her eyes were turned from him, and refused to meet his.

"You can live without these, you cannot without gold," she answered, shortly.

"And what a hard, cold, sunless life it would be without them," he said, going over to the chimney-piece and filling his pipe with bird's-eye. Then he struck a light, came back, and took up the brushes once more.

“Money attracts friends, just as flowers attract bees,” she commenced, “and money buys love every day.”

This time she laughed a little bitterly, and looked the painter in the face.

“I wish the man joy of his bargain who buys love.”

“Do you?” she asked, curtly. “But then such strong phrases as buying or selling are not used; ‘marriage settlements’ is the correct phrase. Cupid, perhaps, has grown old and wise now-a-days, and thrown off the bandage from his eyes. At all events, he sees sufficiently well to fire the heart of a woman with love only for men with heavy rent-rolls and good balances at their bankers.”

“You are unjust.”

“No, I speak the truth. We no longer live in Arcadia, Marc; I wish we did. The poor, dear old gods and goddesses fell in

love much as they pleased, without any thought of money, or carriages, or clothes, or things, and a happy time they had of it, I suppose."

The artist made no answer for a few minutes. Then he took the pipe from his mouth and said,

"Something has gone wrong with you to-day, Capri, or you would not speak so bitterly."

Her face flushed in an instant.

"Perhaps; there would be nothing new in that."

"Tell me all about it; that will relieve you."

"And bore you."

"Cannot you trust me? You know you promised to look on me as your friend."

She jumped up suddenly and flung her arms impetuously round his neck, knocking the palette from his hand, which descend-

ed, paint-side downwards, on the floor.

"You are the best and dearest friend man or woman ever had," she said, and, with the freedom and impulsiveness of a child, she kissed him heartily on the forehead.

The warm blood came into the young man's face, a bright, yearning light dawned in his eyes.

"Now, Capri, what is it?" he asked, when she had released him from the pleasant burden of her arms, and hastily resumed her seat once more. Then, while waiting for her answer, he took the palette up, washed off some of the colours which, in their fall, had got confusingly mixed.

She did not speak, and he went on,

"You can tell me while I put in these few touches. We must take advantage of the light we have; then you shall make some coffee. I have got a French roll, a

chicken and ham sausage, and we will be as jolly over them as——”

“As Bacchantes. Ah! Marc, I sometimes think you must have been a fawn, and have lived in old Arcadia. The air and freshness of the glad golden age seems to cling about you. I feel quite satisfied you danced in the cool, sweet, fragrant woods to the sound of Pan's pipes, and sported with the dryads bound in chains of sacred myrtle and roses, and rollicked with mad glee at the revels of Silenus.”

“How happy I must have been!”

“And would be still, but that you fell in love with one of the daughters of men, for which offence you were turned out of Arcadia, made human, and sent into this matter-of-fact, beef-and-plum-pudding-eating age.”

“I wish I could go back,” he replied, laughing at what she had said.

"I fear it would be no use your going back, now you have lived among the children of men and tasted the fruit of knowledge. Once having been human, you could never again regain your old fawn-like simplicity; just as those who have once sinned, repent as they may, can never regain a something they have lost."

"Perhaps I could. I might remember my humanity as a dream."

"And do we never long for things we have seen and known in dreams?" she asked, thoughtfully, and sat there silently whilst the artist put some touches here and there on the canvas.

At last he looked up and said,

"You have not yet told me what it was that put you out of humour to-day."

"Oh! it was nothing new, the same old thing over and over again. Pa has had a quarrel with his landlady for rent; he has

not a penny now, and won't be paid his pension until the end of next week."

"And meanwhile——"

"Meanwhile he lives on his wits or borrows from his friends. I'm getting sick, terribly sick, of it all. I have known it for years and years, until I have come to believe it is like Tennyson's brook, and will run on for ever."

"And how do you manage, Capri?"

"Oh! I 'always come right somehow. Pa says Mrs. Fum's bark is worse than her bite, and I know she must have been 'put out,' as she calls it, or she would never have spoken to him as she did to-day. I teach her two daughters singing, and I have made them like me—I never have much trouble in doing that with anyone—and their hearts are safe passports to their mother's, so for my sake Mrs. Fum will say no more to Pa. But it's miserable to have

a father who is always on the watch to take in a friend or borrow from a chance acquaintance, and wretched to live in a back pair for which you are always in debt. I often steal up and down stairs like a culprit. I know I cannot bear it much longer; some last straw will break my back one day, and then I'll——"

"You'll what?"

"God knows; I do not—I wish I did: go on the stage if I can, but Pa will not allow that. Besides, I do not quite want to leave him yet; if I did, I suppose he would go to the bad—not that my staying saves him much as it is."

"But then he is your only relative, Capri; you often told me so, and you must not leave him until you give some one the right to protect you for life," he said, looking at her wistfully.

"I suppose you mean until I marry

some one. That may be a long time—longer than I can afford to wait,” she answered.

They were both silent for a while after her last words. Capri was thinking of her future life, and the painter was wishing to heaven he was not so poor.

“Pa is so foolish, I cannot respect him if I try ever so hard,” she said, after a few minutes. “Last quarter, when he got his pension, he ordered a supper and half a dozen of claret without ever letting me know, and asked Lord Harrick—for next to a good dinner he best loves a lord—and some young men, mere acquaintances, with good names and bad manners, whom he met at the gymnasium where he gives fencing lessons, and he never asked Newton Marrix or dear old Pallamari, who have often proved his best friends.”

“You see, your father is not Bohemian

enough to care for the society of a music-teacher or the company of Newton Marrix, an author still at the foot of Parnassus."

"Perhaps not, but he appreciates their occasional loans. Yesterday he asked one of his gymnasium friends with the good name and bad manners for a sovereign in advance of his fencing lessons, and he blankly refused."

She laughed, half bitterly, half amusedly, at the thought.

"I often wonder at Captain Dankers having such a Bohemian daughter," said the artist.

"I will tell you my history by-and-by, Marc, in confidence, just as actors did in old dramas, when they brought their chairs down to the footlights, and discoursed to the audience of their bosom secrets."

"Very well, now I have done for to-day," he said, holding his brush up in mid-

air, and looking at the canvas critically.

Capri came, and, standing behind him, looked over his shoulder long and anxiously at the half-finished picture.

"You have made me look very beautiful," she said to him, softly; "but why didn't you paint me as some other character than Cophetua?"

"I don't know. I thought it suited you best. Whom would you have me paint you as—Ophelia, Desdemona, Cleopatra?"

"No, Marc, none of these. I suppose, woman-like, I am hard to please. Ophelia and Desdemona were foolish creatures, who suffered for their love, and I am not sufficiently majestic for Cleopatra. After all, the beggar maid may suit me best.

In robe and crown the king stept down

To meet and greet her on her way;

'It is no wonder,' said the lords,

'She is more beautiful than day.'

Beauty, after all, does a good deal in this world of ours, Marc."

"And is often a fatal gift."

"That depends, my friend," she answered, looking at the canvas again, and then at the reflection of her face which she caught in a little mirror that hung on the wall of the attic studio.

She saw that hers was the divine gift of loveliness. A smile of satisfaction came into her face, and made it beam with pleasure. Her features were Grecian in their cast; the forehead low and square, the brows straight and well marked, the nose delicate as chiseled marble, the mouth full and ripe, at once indicating sensitiveness and love of pleasure. Her complexion was of a clear olive tint; her dark, almond-shaped eyes, liquid, tender, and bright; her hair, almost black, was relieved by an under-tone of dusky gold.

Marcus Phillips gravely watched the almost child-like delight she exhibited at her reflection, as she stood gazing at it in the little square of mirror. With an artist's instincts he loved all that was beautiful, but he never told or hinted to the girl how much she owed to nature.

"Beauty often gains much in life," said he, removing the easel, and placing a little table in the centre of the room. "It gains much, but its power falls short oftentimes. It is like money, there are some things it cannot give."

"Ay, but there are many good things it obtains for onè. Now get me some coffee, Marc, and don't philosophise. Besides, I have not lived so long in the world without seeing and knowing its value. Human nature is human nature, and a woman's lovely face has often ruled the wisest, bravest, and best man before now. 'It is

no wonder, said the lords.' Now I'll boil the water, and you lay the table as well as you can, for all men are awkward at such things."

She knelt down on the hearth, fanned the smouldering embers to a flame, boiled the water and made coffee.

The artist tidied the room, picked up a palette-knife from the floor, removed some paint-brushes from the chairs, placed the canvas against the wall, laid the table, and finally produced a fresh French roll and a chicken and ham sausage from a little black-looking cupboard set high up in the wall.

Then they sat down as light-hearted as two children.

"It's a pity you are poor, Marc; no, I mean that you are not rich, which is almost the same," the girl said, suspending a morsel of sausage between her lips and the

plate, and looking into the artist's handsome face.

"Why is it a pity? I am quite happy, Capri."

"Ah! you do not understand the pomp and grandeur of wealth." She answered him half jestingly.

"So much the better, say I."

"If you were rich, you would have a studio with ruby velvet curtains, a stained floor, and Persian rugs, statues of old gods and graces, Italian engravings, Queen Anne furniture—have a little more coffee, there's plenty in the pot, Marc—quaint carvings, and sketches on the walls. Ah! would not all that be beautiful?"

"Then I am certain I would not be half so jolly as I am now. And I could never sit down to a table I laid myself, and drink tea alone with you."

"It's not tea, but coffee. But, if you

were rich, I'd come and see you, and we would drink tea out of six mark china cups, and have it brought in by a page; and you would have a new velvet coat, and get your hair cut—though that would be a pity—and wear a tall, shining hat——”

“In the studio?”

“You interrupt me. No, not in the studio, of course. Then I would come dressed in silks, and you would paint me like one of Rubens' women, in rich-hued velvets and with braided hair.”

She sighed as she spoke and looked round the studio, which had a small square of very threadbare carpet, looking like a little island in a great ocean of room, a sofa and a few chairs mercifully covered with cheap chintz.

“What is the use for sighing for the moon when one must stay down on the earth?” he asked.

"Well, the moon will come down to you some day : I mean you will be rich. Pallamari says you have genius, and he knows a great deal about art."

"Pallamari is an indulgent friend."

"But his criticisms are honest. Besides in your work I know there is that nameless something that makes one look at it twice and remember it long afterwards."

"I am sorry the hanging committee at Burlington House does not think so."

"But you know well enough that the committee's opinion is worth nothing. An honest Royal Academician sent in a picture anonymously last year, and it was rejected. When you become famous and daub, you will get fifty times the price you do now for the careful work you call pot-boilers."

"When did you turn prophetess?"

"Never mind when. You will become

famous, I know ; but, my dear Marc, you will have to wait."

"If I had anyone to wait with me, I should not mind," he began, in a low, earnest voice.

"You are but twenty-four, and a mere boy yet," she replied, with a merry little laugh that had a sweet silvery peal in it. "Why should you want anyone to wait with you and be a drag on you for years, perhaps half starve on love in a London attic. Now don't frown at me in that way or I will cry. I am only cruel to be kind."

He did not answer her, a troubled look came into his face, he turned his eyes away from her.

"Now, it's different with a woman," she went on again, after a few seconds' pause ; "men toil through the best days of their lives for fame or independence ; a woman

with a pretty face, and without an ounce of brains in her head, gets some one to fall in love with her in an hour or a day and she secures both at one stroke."

"Capri," he said, suddenly, and her quick ear detected that his voice was harsh for once, "you are preaching down your heart—your better self."

His frank, blue eyes looked at her questioningly; she lowered her head and made no answer, for she knew he had spoken what was true.

"Take some sausage, Marc, I am not saying anything wrong. Circumstances make us all what we are. I often think my whole life, so far as it has gone, has been a mistake. I cannot see why I came into existence at all; but, once being here, I must do the best I can for myself, yet it takes such a time waiting before the best comes."

"Time is woman's greatest enemy."

"Don't get epigrammatical," she said. Then, changing her voice to a softer key, she went on. "Since my earliest days I have known what the want of money means, and it made existence hard for me. Indeed I think I never really was a child."

"If so, I am sorry, very sorry for you, Capri. A happy childhood is the best part of life ; no period afterwards, no matter how bright, can make up for its loss." He was thinking, as he spoke, of his own earlier days.

"Perhaps not," she said, tapping her spoon against the empty tea-cup. "One cannot shape one's earlier life any more than one can help being born. If my darling mother lived, I think I should be happier than what I am now, and better."

"And so should I if mine lived," said

the artist quickly, for he was glad to have this bond of sympathy between them.

"My mother," said Capri, and a thoughtful light came into her great dark eyes, "sang in the opera at La Scala in Naples. She was a lovely woman, too handsome to live long, people said, and they were right. Even as I remember her in her last days, she was wonderfully beautiful, and had a pale, patient look in her face which I shall never forget. Pa, who was in the English army, was staying at Naples on sick leave when she was young. She fell in love with him."

Capri paused a moment. She was never certain as to whether the church had pronounced a benison on her parents' union, so on this point she wisely held her tongue.

"My mother continued on the stage," the girl went on, "and I was born on the island which gave me its name and little

more. Then she lost her voice and fell into a consumption, and was able to earn no more money. Pa was always, I am afraid, a scamp and selfish. When she could hold her engagement no longer at the opera, his love for her grew cold. He had to go back to England; this broke her heart and hastened her death."

The girl's voice was soft and plaintive, her eyes liquid as if with tears.

"My remembrance of my mother brings to my mind the face of a woman who suffered much with great patience. Some friends of hers were kind and good; they were humble people, but they loved her, and afterwards loved me for her sake. She was unwilling to die; she wanted to live for my sake. She often clung about me, kissing me passionately, her pale face wet with tears. One day she lay white and cold; some one said she was at rest, and

that her heart was broken. I had never seen death before. Then I learned that I was left alone in life, and all the world seemed a blank. I stayed with my friends. Brown-faced Teresina, who said her rosary by day and night, loved me as if I had been her child. God had sent me to her, she said: the old padre taught me to read and write; it was all he could do for me. Before I was eight years old I knew Dante and Tasso from cover to cover. Old Baptista, with eyes as black as coals, gave me lessons in music and singing; he played the organ of our little church where I sang. He said I had the voice of an angel."

Capri paused for a while; the artist was looking into her eyes and listening to every word she said.

"I think I could have lived happily for life with those good, simple people, Marc, and I often wish I had been allowed to

remain there. But it was not to be. When I was about ten years old, Pa came to Naples and said I should return to England with him. I cried as if my heart would break. I begged and prayed of him to let me remain with my good old friends; it was no use. We came to England: Pa had lost his money, and had to retire from the army. After a while he commenced giving fencing lessons, which he soon found to add considerably to his means, and so that is my early history," she added. "I sometimes wonder if I shall ever see Capri again. It is a beautiful place, Marc," she said, a wistful look coming into her face. "I think the sun never shines so bright as there, and then the sky is so clear and blue. It haunts me some days like a dream. I see the little cabin where I used to live up on the beach, see the bare-legged fishermen in their red caps,

the brown-sailed fishing-boats drawn up on the sands, the great yellow nets out drying in the sun ; see Naples lying asleep in the light, and further on Vesuvius, and hear the sea beating in for ever on the coast like eternal music."

"It has made you a poetess."

"It would have done the same with anyone living there."

"But if you had never come to England I should not have seen you."

"Perhaps not, perhaps yes. I believe in Fate. If we were destined to meet we should do so, though I never left the island and you never wanted a fencing lesson."

"Who can say?"

"And now, Marc, the dearest delights come to an end, you know, in this weary world, and so have your sausage and roll and my talk, and so I must get home," she said, rising up from the table.

"When will you be able to give me another sitting?" he asked, willing to keep her as long as she would stay.

"I cannot say. I may be able to look round to-morrow. I will if I can. I always like to have a talk with you ; it's the next best thing to having a chat with myself. I must talk to some one, and you understand me better than anyone else."

"Try to come, if you can."

"I shall; but perhaps it would be better for you to finish up that pot-boiling landscape in the corner."

"Oh! that is only a couple of hours' work, and I shall put it on the easel when you are gone."

"What will you do with the 'Beggar Maid,' when it is finished? Shall my face adorn the picture-dealer's window? Perhaps some rich *gentilhomme* may take a

fancy to my face, and ask who I am, and come and make love to me."

"I hope not," said the artist, knocking the ashes out of his pipe slowly and deliberately.

"Thank you for your kind wishes, Mr. Phillips," she said, at first assuming an air of indignation, and then breaking into one of her bursts of rippling laughter. "However, there is no fear of the *gentilhomme* coming. Kings never marry beggar maids now-a-days, and Lords of Burleigh are few and far between; alas! for the unromantic days upon which I have fallen."

"I will send the 'Beggar Maid' to the Academy on chance, I think."

"Ah! to be hung on the walls of Burlington House, and have admiring crowds before me all day long from May to August, would not that be glorious?" she said, clasping her hands delightedly,

and looking at the young artist rapturously. A bright light came into her eyes at the prospect, her face beamed with smiles.

“I shall send it in, Capri.”

“Do,” she said. “But I am afraid it will be of little use.”

She was thinking more of herself than of him.

“Never venture, never win,” he said.

“True, Marc; and now I must really go. Thank you for your pleasant afternoon. Help me on with my ulster—don’t tear it, for it cost but thirteen shillings, and is very tender. *Addio, caro mio*, oh! how you press my hand,” she cried out, comically. “Good-bye, dear old Marc,” she added, and in another second she had gone.

CHAPTER II.

NEWTON MARRIX GIVES ADVICE.

THE room seemed robbed of its brightness when Capri had gone. All the pleasant colouring vanished, all the grace and picturesqueness which her figure had lent the room departed, and the attic studio stood out in its unlovely, realistic bareness.

Marcus Phillips looked round him once, then placed the pot-boiler on the easel before him, and sat down before it to work.

His head was as handsome as a young god's, and the dreaminess of genius lurked in his blue eyes, that deepened to violet in the shade. His features were clearly cut and handsome, his hair was bright brown.

For all his bright hair and the soft, dreamy light of his eyes, Marcus Phillips was thoroughly a manly man. He was almost six feet high, and made in proportion, his shoulders broad, his limbs well formed and supple.

So far as kindred and friends went, he stood quite alone in all the world. If he were to die in the morning, leaving behind him ten thousand pounds and an unsigned will, he knew of no relative who could lay claim to his wealth.

His was a case of isolation. Such singular instances sometimes occur, and form marked contrasts to other members of the human race whose sisters, whose cousins,

and whose aunts spread themselves like a vast network over half a country, and in turn knit themselves into other prolific families, until the chain of relationship bids fair to include the population of Great Britain.

Marcus Phillips was alone in life. His father died while he was yet quite a lad ; his mother married again, and he was sent to school. He still remembered, as if it but happened yesterday, how the news of his mother's death had been broken to him by the head-master—recollected his journey to the house, which was from that time his home no more.

At the age of eighteen he was battling with the world. It was a hard struggle, for he was almost penniless, and was minus experience. His mother's husband had children of his own to provide for, and had neither the desire nor intention

of adopting him. He left the household which had once been his home, and came to London. Our great capital has ever had strong attractions, sometimes fatal, for the young. There is something in its noise, its commerce, and its eternal bustle that stimulates to action; it looks so mighty, so far-stretching, that they imagine there must be room for yet another life within its vastness. Its broad thoroughfares are bright and pleasant, its grimy, narrow streets offer a refuge and hiding-place in times of misery, and its river looks dark deep and silent if the worst comes at last, and all hopes die within young hearts.

Marcus Phillips came to London, and for the first time learned how terribly selfish is the great world. The crowd ignored his existence; not one individual in the vast throng heeded him, or reached

him out a helping hand. Not fitted by special training for any pursuit, he was utterly helpless, and was seemingly flung among his fellow-men as weeds are cast upon strong currents to sink in a helpless struggle. Alone and unknown among millions, his lot was sad ; but fate one day took pity on him, and threw a vagabond, otherwise an actor, in his way—a man with a tender heart and a disreputable character, for tenderness is not at all confined to respectability. This man, hearing the lad's story, proposed that he should, as a general utility member, join his company, which was just then going into the provinces. So he commenced life as an actor, and communicated the intelligence to his step-father ; not that he cared in the least for that individual's opinion ; he flung the news at him as a gauntlet ; it would be sufficient to part them for ever,

he knew, and this was what he most desired.

In good time an answer came. Marcus Phillips' father declared that, as a religious and upright man who sought salvation, he could hold neither bond nor fellowship with one who had become a strolling player, and whose soul, he was candid enough to admit, was on the straight road to eternal perdition. Puritan prejudices still linger in provincial breasts, and members of the profession theatrical are yet looked on as the children of one who shall be nameless.

For three years Marcus Phillips made tours through the provinces, north, south, east, and west. Among a fraternity of Bohemians he passed a very happy time, a free and merry life that knew few cares and fewer responsibilities. When one is young, and can earn enough to keep body

and soul together, the world looks fair and pleasant, and the young actor found it so; moreover, the experience of men and women which his profession afforded was one of the most valuable lessons he could learn.

Among one of the companies with which Marcus Phillips travelled, was a scene-painter, who took a fancy to the young man, and for love of art taught him to mix colours and handle a brush.

"It will do you no harm, my boy, to learn all trades," said the artist, who, though the mildest of men, was the villain of the company, who invariably wore a black beard, jack boots, and a slouched hat, and nightly died at the end of the last act in a most agonizing manner within eighteen inches of the footlights. "It will do you no harm," he repeated. "I once travelled with a manager who painted

his own scenes, played the piano in the orchestra between the acts, took the lead in the piece every night, and altered the company's costumes."

And then this mild man, whose chief pride lay in the enactment of nightly villainy, went on with the painting of a cottage interior.

Marcus Phillips was soon found to have an eye for colour and design, and that intuitive love for this new art which is often the best test of the direction in which a man's genius lies. In a short time the pupil's works were before the master's, and one day his friend said to him,

"Phillips, my boy, if I were you, I should leave the stage, and go in thoroughly for painting. Nature intended you for an artist instead of an actor. You may have a bit of up-hill work at first, but, when I see a bit of good painting, I know

it; and some day you may write R.A. after your name, I bet my life," said the scene-painter, with all the glowing hopefulness of friendship.

" 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush,' old man," replied Marcus. "You know I have very little put by—we actors are not provident people. And then, I dare say, there are dozens of men in town and out of it who could cover a square of canvas better than I, and who are yet more out of elbows than your obedient servant. If I went to London and set up as an artist, I should probably starve."

"I know a trick worth two of starving."

"What's that?"

"Don't give up the stage yet for a while, but get an engagement in town, and take lessons in painting. Be an actor by night, an artist by day."

"That would certainly be a glorious

thing, and I have a mind to try it, old man."

"If you take a friend's advice, you will."

"I can always come back to the provinces, if I don't succeed."

"Leave out the 'if,' and say there is no such word as fail," said the scene-painter, dramatically waving his right hand.

"You are right," said Marcus.

"Erase such a word from the bright lexicon of your youth," said the scenic artist, in a lofty tone. Then he added, more gently,

"I wish I had life again before me, but you see I am married to the leading lady, and have children four."

Marcus gave him his hand in sympathy, the scenic artist pressed it affectionately.

Marcus Phillips came to town, got an engagement to play a small part at the

Ophelia Theatre, hired an attic in Fitzroy Street, and set up an easel. He worked hard and fast. He had energy and perseverance, for he knew he had much to learn. Labour, however, is said to overcome all things. He took lessons in figure-modelling from an artist in Kensington, and learned fencing as a branch of his theatrical profession from Captain Dankers.

After three years of hard work, he began to paint pictures which commanded a reasonable price at the dealers', and in order to devote himself entirely to painting he gave up the stage. One cannot burn the candle at both ends.

On the afternoon on which the chapter opens, when Capri had gone, the young artist stood before the pot-boiler in silent contemplation and idleness, for his thoughts followed the girl to her home. He was loth to believe her so mercenary as she

declared herself ; her character had many sides ; she was so much a child of impulse that it was difficult to say when she really spoke from her heart, and she probably did not always know herself. Her life was not cast in pleasant lines ; she was almost alone in the world. True she had a circle of literary and artistic male friends who learned sword exercise and fencing from her father, and who were all more or less poor and had the advantage of commencing life with strong hopes of achieving great things in the future.

Capri was a favourite with them all, and they were ever ready to give her passes for the theatre or tickets for concerts or picture-galleries when they had them ; they lent her their books, too, and sometimes would come and read her a chapter or a poem in manuscript hot from the *feu sacré* of their souls.

Yet Marcus pitied her ; the outward view of her life was bright enough, but the seamy side was not over-pleasant. We have all two sides to our daily lives, separate and diverse from each other as heaven from hell.

Capri was a stranger to the simple, homely pleasures of domestic life, which so often tend to bring out all that is best in our natures and cast our characters in happy and useful moulds. None of those home influences which sweeten and protect the lives of most girls were hers ; she had few female friends, her opportunities of meeting them were limited, and there was little sympathy between her and English girls of her own age with whom she happened to come in contact.

So Marcus Phillips pitied her, not suspecting just then that his feelings were of a deeper kind. Love often comes in the

guise of pity ; between sympathy and love there is only half a step : one is the reflection of the other.

Capri, on the other hand, knew that the artist was in love with her. Women's perceptions regarding matters of affection are quick indeed. A woman knows a man is in love with her before he has dreamt of the existence of his passion. Capri fathomed his heart, and read his secret with strangely opposite feelings. She was proud of winning his love : it was a gift for which any woman might feel grateful ; yet she felt unworthy of the gift, knowing herself incapable of valuing it at its proper estimate.

Whilst the artist was yet thinking over what the girl had said to him of the value of money and beauty in the world's eyes, he heard a tap at the door and in came his friend Newton Marrix.

"Ah, New," he said, giving him his hand. "You have just come in time to give your advice—always valuable, old man—about this pot-boiler. Do you think the sky too yellow?"

"Call it golden."

"Well, golden. You see the public likes a good sunset, something between Turner and eggs and bacon."

"No, not too golden," replied Newton Marrix, who was a rising author, and inclined to be severely critical on art matters, as became a literary man.

"I'll deepen the yellow—gold, I mean."

"Don't you think a line of crimson light——"

"Otherwise carmine."

"Down near the sea would be an improvement," said the young author, standing a little way off, with his right hand

shading his eyes, and gazing hard at the canvas.

“Very well, I will put it on while you are here, until you see the effect. You will find some cigarettes on the little table beyond; there is tobacco in the jar on the chimney-piece, if you have brought your pipe.”

“Capital idea.”

“The pipe or the sunlight?”

“The sunlight, of course. You must have a reflection down in the waves, which I fear are terribly green.”

“Nothing like plenty of colour for my friend the British public.”

“The waves must beat round the sun’s feet,” said Newton Marrix, poetically, whilst he filled his pipe. Pipes and poetry harmonize capitally.

“The sun’s feet?”

"Yes. Don't you remember what Swinburne says?

'Break again like waves that beat
Round the sun's feet.'

"Very well. I will put the sun's feet in water—give them a bath."

"I protest, Marc," he said, raising both his hands melodramatically.

"This bit of canvas is a stunner now," said the artist, as the brush moved nimbly in his hand. "Red sun, golden clouds, green sea, white-sailed boat, yellow sands. The British public will have its money's worth of colouring, or know for what."

"'Pon my life, Marc, it's a charming little picture, for all its glare, and ought to fetch thirty guineas."

"It will bring me ten."

"Well, never mind, in a dozen years a canvas of the same size will fetch you a hundred."

"I hope you may turn out a prophet in your own country."

"I hope so, for your sake, old man."

"How is your new novel getting on?"

"Oh! slowly. I have killed one man to-day in poetic justice; and some of the other people may well tremble in their shoes, for I shall certainly murder a couple more of them!"

"Cold-blooded monster."

"Then my heroine has two husbands living, and she elopes from the second, and all the characters fall in love with those they should not *à la* elective affinities. For if a young author wants to get a hearing, Marc, my boy, he must make his books fit for nobody to read, in order that everybody may read them."

"Is that the secret of success?"

"One of them. The melodramatic villain, with an evil face and dark eyes,

and the sweet *ingénue*, have gone out with the last generation. The villains of to-day in real life and fiction wear spotless linen, look as innocent as angels, and smash the decalogue in kid gloves as a sort of mild pastime. The heroines are no longer dear innocents, fresh from Arcadian schools, but are wise in their generation, like the children of darkness."

"It may be so in fiction, not in real life."

"Ah! Marc, my boy, fiction is but a reflex of the time, a portrait of domestic history. The colours are true. Every day you walk through Regent Street, the Seven Dials, or the Strand, you pass by men and women, the story of whose lives, if published, would read stranger than all fiction, and wilder than romance has ever pictured. It is the improbable which is always probable, some one has said, and

truly. At least, this is how we moralists," continued the young man, smiling, and throwing the mighty "we" into his conversation with a careless self-satisfaction, "reconcile ourselves to the use of incidents that seem wild in our pages."

"Human lives are often strange mysteries which we cannot understand, and human hearts are stranger still," said the painter, philosophically.

"Better live without them," answered Newton Marrix. "They are luxuries we cannot afford in these days; a man is much jollier *sans* heart."

"Not better."

"Yes, in pocket," said Newton Marrix, speaking lightly, and without the malice of cynicism.

"However, in fiction you authors have a certain advantage over us artists."

"I cannot see it."

"Well, we cannot paint wives running away from their husbands, and so forth, or people falling in love with an utter disregard to common-place morality."

"No, but you can paint studies from the nude 'sweet, white bodies,' you know, and a few 'lean, lithe limbs' with never a shred to cover them. That is what will bring you before the public in a short time, and make more money for you in six months than all the pot-boilers you could paint in as many years. Only try that style, old man."

Marcus Phillips only laughed as he bent over his canvas to fill in the green waves with his palette knife.

"Only try it, Marc," his friend went on. "Then you can get Mervyn of the *Telegram* to write an article running down the nude in art generally, and your pictures in particular, with a few telling sentences about

pandering to vicious tastes of the present day; that bait always fetches the honest Britisher and his spouse the indignant matron, who knows as much about art as the King of the Cannibal Islands, and imagines nudity means nastiness."

"Then you would have me damned at once and for ever."

"Dear boy, you mistake. Mervyn's article would be answered by a dozen writers every day for a week; you could write a score of them yourself under different names, and by the time you have been denounced and defended, your name would be in all men's mouths and your fame established."

"The nude in art is never profane to me," said the artist.

"Nor to anyone of taste, culture, and education; but to the Philistines abroad it

is a red rag. These asses bray as loud as lions roar, over a new step in high art which means civilization, and the world is full to overflowing with such donkeys."

"They are useful in their way sometimes."

"Yes, I grant you. Their noise attracts, they roll themselves over and over in the roadway of public opinion in paroxysms of passion about some advancement in thought or art, now over a picture, again over a poem, a new era in music, or the announcement of strange psychological facts ; the dust they raise causes the world to look. In this way they unconsciously fulfil their mission."

"And benefit those they sought to make their victims."

"Just so. But, Marc, I came to take you to Mrs. Stonex Stanning's afternoon

at home ; so come on, old man, and you can talk of high art there until you are blue in the face."

"An unartistic colour for the features. However, I do not know Mrs. Stonex Stanning."

"That does not matter ; you soon will. I will introduce you. She is very kind, and she will be glad to see you, for she takes an interest in all artists."

"Well, I had better change my coat."

"Not at all. She has a weakness for velvet coats, especially if they are daubed with paint. You will look all the more artistic as you are ; and don't attempt to brush your hair, that would be monstrous ; you would never be forgiven. Let your scarf flow with Byronic carelessness and grace."

"It looks deucedly untidy."

"No matter. To look as picturesque as

possible is the first duty we owe to ourselves and to our neighbours in artistic society. You know, Marc, women's eyes are the true mirrors in which men see themselves; if a man's personal appearance succeeds in pleasing a woman, he has achieved a victory of which he may feel proud. They are the best judges of what befits a man outwardly."

"Are they as wise concerning the inner man?"

"The inner man is never considered in society, my dear boy. Morals or brains are only secondary considerations to dress. A well-fitting coat is better any day than a good character. If a man only dresses to please us, we care little about what his soul is like; we are generous enough to leave that to himself and Providence. Come along, old man."

"One moment, New."

"You will make an impression in Mrs. Stonex Stanning's rooms, I'll swear."

"I hope she will allow clean hands," said the artist, running to his bed-room to wash off the paint stains from his fingers.

"Hurry up," was the only answer he received.

In a few moments the author and artist were on their way to Mrs. Stonex Stanning's afternoon at home.

CHAPTER III.

THE FENCING LESSON.

CAPTAIN DANKERS rented two back rooms, commonly called "a back pair," of a house in the Euston Road, "convenient to 'bus and rail," as he announced in the advertisements in which he offered to teach sword exercise and fencing.

By this profession, as he was wont to term it, he added considerably to his income, meaning his half pay as a retired captain of an infantry regiment. The

captain was not a man who invariably called things by their proper names, when he imagined other names added in relative proportion to his dignity or importance.

Now that the days of duelling are over, a fact the captain deeply regretted, there exists no great thirst for a knowledge of sword exercise and fencing ; at least not to the extent which the captain desired. His pupils were principally actors, amateur and professional, and young men given to climb horizontal bars, winding themselves eel-like round poles, boxing and other physical exercises.

Among this latter class was one to whom the captain paid considerable deference and attention. This was Lord Harrick, who was just two and twenty years old, the inheritor of a rent-roll valued at seventy thousand per annum, and the in-

heritor of a large fortune which had accumulated during the fourteen years of his minority.

Richard, sixth Viscount Harrick in the peerage of Great Britain, and Baron Jesson in the peerage of Scotland, was a young man remarkable for nothing in particular. He was quite a different personage from his immediate predecessor. The last peer had been a remarkable botanist, and a naturalist of great renown, who had spent his days in hunting for rare specimens of insects ; moreover he was a little crabbed-looking man, who wore thread gloves and read religious tracts with great attention.

The present peer was quite a different man. Diversity of character between father and son is the commonest thing possible now-a-days. The sixth Viscount Harrick did not care a button for all the

insects in Europe, so long as they left him in peace ; and he had never written a line in his life since he left school.

He had a certain amount of respect for money, as became one who daily experienced its market value in the world, and all that his possession of the filthy lucre ensured him from his fellow-men. Yet he was liberal in a measure, and was known to lend money without security ; he had pensioned his last mistress handsomely, and had once paid the debts of a kinsman who had appealed to him, a young cornet in the Guards, who had the extravagant tastes of a duke and the income of a parish beadle.

The Jews had never had Lord Harrick's name on bill or bond during his long minority ; he never gambled or bet, save at the request of his acquaintances, for their pleasure and profit. He was what

is commonly called a good-natured fellow in his way ; his manner was often genial with his fellow-men, and he was generally liked, even by his friends.

It was scarcely possible for anyone to have less character ; his general bearing was common-place, and natural grace was a thing of which he was utterly guiltless. He never offended society by any attempt at originality, or made his friends envious by the brilliancy of his humour or the keenness of his wit. When he talked, he spoke the greatest nonsense outside the range of idiocy, but he made an excellent listener, a fact that gained him considerable appreciation. He was a very neutral individual indeed, whom his tailor dressed well, and who looked exceedingly harmless. He had no talents of any kind, not even for horse-racing or politics, the two great attractions of English life.

Nature, in sending him into existence as the sixth viscount of his line, and the inheritor of a goodly rent-roll, had perhaps come to the kindly consideration that talents would bore him, and had therefore withheld them ; or perhaps Providence foresaw they would prove a burden of which he would far better be rid. As it was, he had less imagination than his groom, and was not so accomplished as his valet, who was a genteel young man, that played the English concertina and read Byron to the upper housemaid.

He would have been considered dull but for the variety his money afforded his friends, and foolish but that he was wise enough to please them. He had no ideas, for those who are born to wealth never require any. They buy their thoughts on current subjects in the daily press, just as one buys bread from the baker. Their

minds are made up for them by the editor of their favourite organ. The wisest thoughts clad in the best language, sparkling wit, and sound sense can be bought for a penny any morning in the year. It is only your needy man who has ideas, sent him by Providence that he may coin them into sovereigns. It is his mission.

Altogether, Lord Harrick was looked on as a model member of society; he was all that a peer should be, and matrons regarded him generally as a man who was destined to make as excellent a husband as any girl need desire, for his income could afford a magnificent settlement, and his dulness would be certain to secure his wife from any interference with the pleasures of her life.

When Capri went home from the studio in Fitzroy Street, she found her father was still out, and her landlady's youngest

daughter waiting for her music-lesson.

"Come along, dear," said Capri to her pupil, who was fully as big as herself; and Capri, quick in all her movements, went up side by side with her to what she was pleased to call the *salon*, and set the girl down before the wiry piano, and commenced the lesson at once.

Capri usually lavished affectionate caresses and terms of endearment upon her two pupils, which all bore fruit, as she intended, in various ways. Her landlady was never unkind to her even when the rent was due a month, and the delicate little presents the landlady's wooden-figured daughters presented in the shape of pretty ribbons, articles of cheap jewellery, and an occasional pair of gloves were all thoroughly acceptable to Capri, who had more than an ordinary woman's love for finery.

On this evening Capri was more affectionate than usual, and took greater pains in the training of her pupil's voice, and, when the music lesson was over, kissed the girl more affectionately than ever, remembering all the while the captain's debt for rent.

Then, when the pupil had gone, Capri sat down to the piano, and, striking a few chords that gave back a feeble, wiry sound, she half sang, half hummed snatches of opera airs and parts of serenades and homely songs she had heard in her childish days long ago ; she sang them very sweetly and with a slight touch of pathos, remembering the island that had been her early home, the honest, kind-hearted, brown-faced peasants who had been her first and best friends. Sitting there alone, the memory of the place rose up before her : she saw the fishing-boats drawn up

on the yellow beach, the high cliffs looking white and scorched in the sunlight, the blue sea sparkling out beyond and rolling in upon the sands with a voiceful music which yet often echoed in her ears through the quiet hours of the day and in the silent watches of the night.

She was so lost in thought that she did not hear a rap on the half-open door and a footstep enter the room. Suddenly she stopped, and looked round.

"Miss Capri," said Lord Harrick, bowing, "I fear I disturb you;" he laid down his hat on a chair, and walked across the room to where she sat.

"No, you don't," answered Capri, turning round from the piano.

"If I don't, pray play on."

"Oh! by all means. I thought you did not care for music. I was afraid it would bore you."

Capri was nothing if not laconic. Lord Harrick let his eye-glass drop suddenly from his eye and smiled ; he was used to her manner, and flattered himself he got on thoroughly with her.

In appearance he contrived to make himself as much like a groom as possible, and probably in this respect fell in with a design which Nature had originally intended before she changed her mind and sent him into existence as the heir to a peerage. Now-a-days, however, our modern lackeys dress so much like gentlemen that it becomes excusable for gentlemen to dress like lackeys.

Lord Harrick's red hair was cut perfectly close to his head ; he had no whiskers, but wore a slight moustache. His eyes were very round and blue, and had a continued look of wonder in them. His face was oval and full, his complexion of

that ruddy tint which often accompanies red hair. On this occasion he wore a coat at once short and tight, a coloured corded waistcoat, with many brass buttons, and trowsers that, clinging to his legs, betrayed an anatomy not at all like Apollo Belvedere's in its symmetry of form.

"I always like to hear you sing or play," he said to Capri, sitting down on a chair near the piano, whilst he tapped his chin with the tortoise-shell handle of a cane which he held in both his hands.

"Do you?"

"Yes; but it is not often you allow me that pleasure," he said, looking at her steadily with his round, blue eyes.

"I had no idea you were musical," she answered, and then, with sweetness and very great feeling, she commenced a song which her friend, old Pallamari, had just composed.

"Thank you," he said, when she had finished. "It is very charming, 'pon my word," and he smiled at Capri as if he were well pleased.

"Do you like it, Lord Harrick?"

"I do indeed. It's—it's capital."

"Well, an old friend of mine, Signor Pallamari, who is a music-teacher, composed it. He wants to have it published, but that would cost him five pounds, and he cannot afford five shillings, so he must only resign himself to his fate."

"Indeed," he said, uneasily.

He would willingly have given Capri the money there and then to please her, yet he did not know in what words to shape his desire.

"The publishing of this song might serve him very much, and it would give him much pleasure, and perhaps profit."

"Where does Pallamari live?" he asked.

The girl's eyes brightened and flashed on him with almost childlike delight.

"He only lives a few doors away, quite by himself, in an attic that is all the world to him. He teaches music. It was he who taught me when I came to England, and never charged a penny; and he plays the violin like Paganini. It almost makes me wild with a thrilling, strange sensation when I hear him."

Capri spoke hurriedly, her face changing in expression with every thought, her dark eyes full of light, her hands clasped close together.

Lord Harrick put his hand into his breast-pocket.

"Will you do me the favour of giving this to Signor Pallamari, and say it came from a friend of yours who admired his song, and wishes to see it published?" he said, handing Capri a note.

The girl glanced at him gratefully, and gave a sudden exclamation of surprise. She took the note, and held it daintily, almost reverentially between her fingers. It was a privilege rare to her.

“How good you are, Lord Harrick,” she said, looking at him with a light and pleasure in her eyes that repayed him for his generosity. “You are so kind. I shall always like you for this,” she said, frankly holding out her hand.

He took it in his, and pressed it quickly, his blue eyes grew rounder, the ruddy colour of his complexion deepened. Capri withdrew her hand.

After this little sentimental scene, the viscount looked slightly confused, his right hand fumbled at his watch-chain, and then drew out his watch.

“It is after six,” he said.

“Is it? Then Pa is late again. He

will not be long though. He has been busy to-day," she went on, drawing a little on her imagination, for she had not the faintest idea of what her military parent had been doing all day, and she more than suspected that he was imbibing a convivial glass with some boon companion at that moment, forgetful of his remunerative pupil.

"Since you are so fond of music," she went on, "I will play to you till he comes in."

"You are awfully good, you know—but I am rather in a hurry this evening. And I wish Captain Dankers would keep his appointments," he blurted out, and then looked red and confused because of his ungallant speech.

"Ah, Lord Harrick, you are scarcely complimentary," she said, good humouredly. "Now, you ought to be glad, or at

least to say you were glad, even if you did not mean it, that Pa is not in just yet, in order that I might talk or play to you."

"Ought I? Well, so I am," he said, recovering himself, "only I never like to be kept waiting, you know."

"Not even when I am here to talk to you?" she asked, archly, smiling at him merrily.

Lord Harrick looked conscious-stricken and a little foolish. Women had never spoken to him in this way before, as Capri did. He liked it coming from her lips, for there was a mixture of the child and coquette about her which pleased him.

"I did not mean quite that," he went on, not very well knowing what he meant.

She interrupted him.

"As a just judgment here comes Pa," she said, hearing the parental steps ascend-

ing the stairs, and, as she ended, Captain Dankers entered the room.

You saw at once he had been a soldier. He was now the remnant of a handsome, well-built man, carefully preserved and brushed, rather dissipated of aspect, but with something of the gentleman clinging to him yet. His cheeks were unpleasantly streaked with red, though they had not yet arrived at the blotchy stage; his eyes were rather uncertain in their gaze, and had a general watery appearance; his nose assumed a pale, pinkish hue. His face was closely shaven but for a heavy military moustache which was dyed and waxed with considerable care; his hair, rigorously parted at the back, was brushed with almost painful force over each ear. His waist, however, was the captain's great pride. It was slim as a boy's, and seemed a pivot on which his body turned and

swayed with every gesture and movement; his coat, buttoned tightly and without a crease over this part of his frame, suggested the idea of a corset. His frock coat, fastened high at the throat, was a trifle threadbare and glassy about the sleeves and elbows, and no vestige of shirt was visible on the black horizon of his breast. His tall hat had acquired an unnaturally brilliant polish, as if it had been carefully black leaded in the morning along with the grate. His boots shone like reflectors, and in one hand he dangled a glove, from which all colour had long since faded, with the grace that had something in it of an antique fop. He bowed ceremoniously to Lord Harrick, raising his hat in one hand with a gesture slightly theatrical, whilst he arranged his hair with the other.

“Fear I am late, my lord,” he said,

laying down his hat and holding out his hand a little timidly, as if he were not quite certain whether it would be taken in a responsive grasp or not. "I have just been giving some sword exercise lessons at pupils' houses. Capri, my love, where are the foils?"

"In the corner," she answered, pointing to the spot, but without offering to fetch them.

Then, as Captain Dankers went for them, she cast one look at Lord Harrick, half comic, half sentimental, and, kissing her finger tips to him, noiselessly slipped out of the room.

He looked after her pleased, amused, and half bewildered; then smiled to himself.

"'Pon my word, she is an awfully nice girl; I am sorry the captain has come in," he said, mentally.

Then the two men took off their coats, rolled up their sleeves to the elbows, put on the gloves, and took up the foils.

"Now, my lord," said the captain, falling into position at once, "right foot forward, right knee slightly bent; that's it—rest on your left leg so—very good."

Lord Harrick followed his instructions.

"Now thrust at my right breast," said the captain, preparing to defend himself heroically against so cold-blooded an onslaught. "Strike harder. Bravo! Now defend yourself," he continued.

The foils struck each other vigorously for some moments, with a sharp, quick sound, then they paused awhile for breath.

"This always reminds me of poor Byron," said the captain, with an assumption of tender melancholy, as if speaking of some close friend. "When we were

stationed in Corsica, I fenced with him one day for a wager, and lost."

"He fenced well?"

"I never saw a man handle the foils more gracefully, and he was vain of the accomplishment."

"And he boxed well, did he not?"

"Yes; but he got beaten by one of our men, a stout Yorkshire fellow, whom he rewarded with a bottle of brandy for beating him black and blue. After that he never mentioned the subject before us again."

They had rested by this time, so the captain said,

"We will now try the quarter parade," and the foils struck each other with some force once more. Once Lord Harrick suddenly lowered his foil, and, the captain's foil grazing his arm somewhat roughly, blood appeared.

"Damn it!" he said, hastily, smarting from the slight pain.

"I am sorry," commenced the captain.

"Oh! it's nothing; it was my own fault," he said, ashamed of his impatience, and he took out his handkerchief to stop the blood.

"Stay, I will have it properly bound for you," said Captain Dankers.

"Don't trouble, thanks." But the captain, not heeding him, had opened the door and called out,

"Capri, Capri, come down, my love."

Captain Dankers invariably used terms of endearment in addressing his daughter before strangers.

She came downstairs at once, and stood in the doorway a moment with a look of inquiry on her face, and then went over to Lord Harrick.

"Are you wounded?" she said, with an

expression more like amusement than anxiety.

"I am," he said; "but there is no necessity to trouble you, Miss Capri."

"But then you are bleeding. How terrible!" she went on, in a tone that perplexed him; he could not tell whether she was joking or in earnest.

"My dear, bring a basin of water and some linen," said the captain.

She left the room, and in a moment returned with some tepid water and a strip of linen cloth. Then she dexterously rolled his shirt-sleeve higher up, took off the handkerchief which he had bound round his arm, and commenced to bathe the spot from which the blood yet continued to flow.

"You are awfully good," he said, feeling it very pleasant to have his arm taken hold of by her soft, delicate fingers.

"I think Nature intended me for a nurse," she replied. "A nurse on the battle-field, you know, like Florence Nightingale, or a Sister of Charity."

"I should like to be one of the lucky soldiers who——"

"Who would get shot at in order that I might attend him."

"Exactly, Miss Capri."

She looked round the room to see that her father was not within earshot.

"I think I should scream if I saw you shot, or stabbed, or anything dreadful that way," she said, coyly.

"Would you really?"

"You just try," she answered.

But Lord Harrick did not see the utility of going so far to test her nerves.

It took some time to stay the blood that would come to the surface of the skin again and again, until the water in the

basin was crimson ; and all the while her fingers, touching his arm lightly, and meeting his fingers, sent a thrill of pleasure through his veins.

When the blood was almost stayed she bound his arm with a soft linen cloth. The pleasant sensation kept tingling in his veins every time she touched him in fastening the bandage round.

He was sorry when the operation was over. It was agreeable to have her face so near his, that now and then, as she bent down, her hair touched his cheek softly, to have her plump little hands grasping his thick arm, to have her laughing eyes looking into his half earnestly, half quizzingly, yet with almost childlike vivacity, and without a *souçon* of boldness in their look.

“ Now,” she said, when the tying was

quite complete, "I have healed the wounded; is not that one of the corporal works of mercy?"

"I know from experience it is."

"Then I begin to feel quite heroic, and to learn for the first time that I have not lived in vain."

"Thank you very much," he said.

The captain coming over to them at that moment, Capri took up the basin to depart.

"I am sorry to have given you all this trouble," he said, looking at her steadily.

"It has given me something to do," she replied, "and that is always a pleasure," and, smiling frankly at him, she departed.

"Now, captain, let us continue."

"Very well; we will get on to

tierce ; let your thrusts be quick and strong."

And once more the fencing lesson was continued.

CHAPTER IV.

MARCUS PHILLIPS ENTERS SOCIETY.

MEANWHILE Newton Marrix and his friend Marcus Phillips were travelling towards Kensington in the Underground Railway, on their way to Mrs. Stonex Stanning's afternoon at home.

"How frightfully hot it is!" said the painter.

"Yes, travelling in the Metropolitan in summer is equal to taking a trip to Hades. In one's flight underground one has all the elements for dashing up an epic of

regions infernal: stifling heat, intense darkness, odours of sulphur, and shrieks, though the latter come from engines, and not lost souls."

"Your imagination is vivid. New, my boy, you begin to make me feel uncomfortable."

"Nothing like a good imagination combined with common sense; then it does not run away with one and make life a dream."

"To most of us it is a great reality."

"It comes as one takes it, I find; to some it is a very serious thing, to others a great joke. One looks on it as a tragedy, another as a farce; but we are too hot to trouble our heads about such things now, old man, and here we have come to our destination, the High Street, Kensington Station. There, that is rhyme, is it not, 'destination and station'? I shall

discover some day that I was born a poet."

"And then you shall die one."

"Perhaps. Some Greek philosopher says no man can say he has a happy life until death comes. I will reverse that piece of philosophy, and say no man can say he has had a miserable existence until the end arrives. I may become a poet and miserable; for misery is essential to a true poet so far as I can judge. Ah, Marc, to die in the odour of poetic sanctity I would give up——"

"Your ticket, sir," said the collector, as they reached the top of the stairs leading from the station.

"There, that prosaic man has completed my sentence. I can say no more." And they passed out from the station into the street towards Mrs. Stanning's house.

Mrs. Stonex Stanning had by her versatile talents gained a certain fame that bade fair to exceed the limits of *dilettante* circles. She had composed a song, "The Blade of the Green Grass," which was sung in many drawing-rooms during the season, and at one or two fashionable concerts; had written a volume of poems that caused considerable attention in the literary world on account of their almost classic purity, and to which the *Athenæum* devoted a column and a half, whether in praise or blame no man might say; had written a society novel in three volumes, of which the *Contemporary* spoke well, and which was largely demanded in the lending libraries, and ran through two editions in twelve months; had exhibited a water-colour sketch in the Grosvenor Gallery, which was hung beside Mr. Burne Jones's picture of "The Golden Stair."

Her talents were well-nigh as versatile as Mademoiselle Sarah Bernhardt's; she might almost be called a genius, but, fortunately for herself, perhaps, she stopped short upon the threshold of that mystic porch which leads to supremacy over fellow-beings or starvation, fame or a garret.

Her name was inseparably connected with art in all its branches. Her home was the rendezvous of all young actors, authors, artists, and musicians. Her word carried weight in all matters of vital importance in æstheticism, such as the contrast of certain shades, the arrangement of a fold of drapery, the tone of a picture, the sufficiency or insufficiency of grace in a pose, the harmony or discord necessary in a symphony. Her opinion was an authority which was never questioned, and ever scrupulously respected.

She was a young and wealthy widow,

who could afford to indulge her fancies much as she pleased, and enjoy that untrammelled liberty which only a widow can command. Moreover, Mrs. Stonex Stanning was beautiful. Her complexion was clear and fair; her eyes, large, grey, and tender, had a yearning, almost spiritual expression in their depths; her lips were most delicately shaped, the upper one short; her chin slightly protruded; her well-shaped forehead was crowned with a wealth of brown hair of a warm shade, like the colour of an autumn leaf. She looked about twenty-three years old, her actual age numbered four summers more.

Her face was singularly handsome, not so much from form or colour as from expression. It was her mind's mirror, not her soul's mask. It had great gentleness of repose, and often the sadness which deep thought imparts. In conver-

sation it reflected every varying thought and humour that crossed her mind, as seas reflect the yellow sunlight and purple shadows of the skies.

The gossips of society wondered among themselves who was to have the honour of sharing her hand and heart, and many a Bohemian looked into her calm grey eyes for some encouraging glance, for some ray of dawning love-light, and looked, alas ! in vain.

Lady Everfair and society at large were much concerned regarding Mrs. Stonex Stanning's choice of a second husband. Next to the news of an approaching divorce, Lady Everfair delighted most in the tidings of a marriage.

Mrs. Stonex Stanning was too young, and fair, and wealthy to go through life without a protector, society said, as if husbands were a kind of Ulster coat to

wrap young women in against the storms of the world. A year ago it was whispered in every drawing-room that a certain marquis, who had had two wives, and who wears a wig and takes snuff, had offered to raise her to the peerage, an honour she had promptly declined. It was well known too that Falmore Eastwing, the famous English baritone, had sent her a proposal secreted in a bouquet, and all the world could tell that honest John Grayworth, who was madly in love with her, asked her to marry him, and on being refused had left England and gone to Palestine, where he studied religious art and painted his last famous picture.

If Mrs. Stonex Stanning's heart was ever touched, she made no sign or motion which the outer world, ever carefully on the watch, could discover. Society indeed thought it was very doubtful if she had

ever loved, ever been stirred and tempest-tost by a great passion.

Mr. Stonex Stanning, when he married her, was more than twenty years her senior. She was eighteen, he was forty. She was the daughter of an unsuccessful artist who had married for love, poor fellow, brought three daughters into the world to half starve and harass themselves throughout the brightest days of their young years.

Felice was the youngest, and with her Mr. Stonex Stanning, a successful financier of great wealth and some culture, fell in love. The young girl, who had learned the benefit of gold by lacking it all her life, and who had but too wide an experience of the straits and shifts of shabby gentility, and the recourses to which the want of a sovereign or two will reduce a household, and knew the bitterness of that

humility pill which hard circumstances will force down the throats of the bravest, sensibly accepted her wealthy suitor, and showed him so much gratitude that he mistook it for love to his death day, and was all the happier for his illusion.

They lived for six years without a hasty or unkind word passing between them, which is very much in married life. Felice was surrounded by all the luxuries that wealth could purchase or taste suggest. She had introduced her sisters into society, and they in return paid her the compliment, and did themselves the justice of marrying well. The world went well with her; she made an exemplary wife, and, when her husband died, he showed his appreciation for her in the most sterling way by leaving her an income of a clear six thousand a year.

During the three years of her widow-

hood, lovers had come and gone at her bidding. She was yet free.

Society grew impatient and tired of speculating as to whether she would again enter the holy bonds of matrimony. It believed her previous experience of that state had been sufficiently fortunate and happy to warrant her risking a second venture in that most uncertain of all lotteries.

But Mrs. Stonex Stanning considered liberty a boon, and she had as yet seen no man for whom she would forfeit it, or with whom she could walk hand-in-hand through all her future days.

Her home in Kensington was a pleasant retreat, and her weekly five o'clock teas were social reunions to be long remembered. Her drawing-room was long and narrow; through the bay-window at either end a pleasant vista of flower-beds, smooth

cut grass, and foliage was to be seen; within the room a bewildering yet grateful view of all things artistic and beautiful met the sight. In the centre, a grand, square piano stood; on the up-raised cover was a picture painted on a golden background, of Alcestis, rising weird and fair from Hades, with the light of a great hope in her eyes, and the lustre of a new dawn gleaming on her fair spiritual face.

Chairs of every period and design, from the gilt-back, crimson-satined gim-crack of to-day to the massive Elizabethan, rich in figured velvet and carved oak, were scattered about. Pictures of all kinds and sizes, not one corresponding in design or shape with the other, covered the walls except where the brackets rested; a water-colour sketch beside a chalk study by Landseer, an old Florentine engraving next a modern chromograph, an etching

of Charles Meryons beside a painting in oils by Ettye, a pencil sketch by Hogarth close by an early English print. Many of the pictures were the gifts of their painters, all of them had some interest connected with them. Carved naiads, the work of a famous artist in wood, supported brackets on which antique vases were set, each one of which had an historical legend of its own. Altogether, the room had a most artistic effect, the *ensemble* was considered delightful.

When Marcus Phillips and his friend arrived it was full of people, not one of whom the artist knew. Newton Marris, on the contrary, seemed acquainted with everyone, shook hands, and nodded, and smiled with easy familiarity as he pushed his way through the crowd.

"Come along, Marc," he whispered, "there is our hostess, in pale yellow,

talking to that tall man over there. His name is Mr. Freake."

The tall man had piercing grey eyes and long, yellow hair, and stooped a little. He was a personal friend of Mr. John Ruskin, and as such was a high authority on art, whose words were usually treasured by admiring young ladies who thought they painted, and who, after listening to Mr. Freake's discourse on art, went away bearing in their breasts the conviction that they were likewise authorities in themselves, only separated from the great art-critic by the thin wall which Mr. Freake represented.

When the disciple of art delivered himself of his ideas, he frowned so terribly and spoke so dogmatically that even the most advanced of the young ladies never dreamt of contradicting him. He had commenced life by taking very serious views of it, and thinking, as he believed,

of the grave responsibilities of existence. His thoughts indeed were so heavy as to render him so likewise ; he was very much in earnest concerning all things.

Young men often set out in life with such views, as others of another class launch out into verses that overflow their friends' albums, and plague their mistresses by most pathetic appeals to their hearts or sonnets to their eyebrows. These are stages through which they graduate, just as children pass through whooping-cough and measles.

When Newton Marrix approached Mrs. Stonex Stanning she held out her hand to him very cordially.

"Allow me," said the author, "to introduce a friend of mine, Mr. Marcus Phillips, artist, at your service."

Mrs. Stonex Stanning smiled and bowed gracefully.

"Do you exhibit, Mr. Phillips?" she asked, opening a handsomely painted fan covered with quaint Egyptian figures worshipping at the shrine of Osiris.

"I have not yet been fortunate enough to please the hanging committee at Burlington House," he answered.

"Which is almost a merit," said Mr. Freake, who never waited for an introduction, or indeed thought one necessary when he wished to speak to men and women. "Paint for art's sake," he continued, "not for the mere sake of exhibiting, not for a popularity, which means degradation in these days, not for the sake of having your name on men's lips; paint for all that is divine and true in your vocation."

As Mr. Freake concluded he looked seriously into Marcus Phillips' eyes, and then sighed.

"At present I paint pot-boilers for the

sake of the dealers," said the painter, prosaically, "I have not yet time to think of the ends to which art tends."

Mrs. Stonex Stanning gave him a sharp, sudden look. She was quick to read men's minds.

"But what he calls pot-boilers, are really gems," said Newton Marrix.

"Or seem so to the enthusiastic criticism of a friend," said Marcus.

"His last canvas, a little sea-bit, is charming," said the author to his hostess.

"It is most difficult to paint the sea," said Mr. Freake, turning his eyes on the artist's face once more as if to look him through and through. "The sea is a special study in itself, not merely a back or foreground for a wide stretch of green or blue space on which to place a yellow-sailed boat. The sea is an inspired element, in turn it should inspire the true artist."

"Nature should always do that," put in Mrs. Stonex Stanning.

"Yes, but especially the sea," responded Mr. Freake. "The sight of it even on canvas always fills me with a sense of liberty and freshness, if it is well-painted; but I have seen sea-bits like strips of blue glazed calico, which look much less like the real thing than a gilt paste-board crown does to a royal coronet. Give me the seas Claude painted," Mr. Freake said, and when he had finished he ran his long fingers through his auburn hair, and gazed before him as if he were addressing some invisible individuals.

"Canaletto's seas are all beautiful too," said Mrs. Stonex Stanning, looking at the art-critic.

"He was untrue to Nature," replied Mr. Freake, shaking his head sadly.

"And Nature is ever so beautiful, it

seems a sin to rob her of her due," said the painter, "I find I can never do her sufficient justice."

"Who can?" asked Mrs. Stonex Stan-ning, examining the figures prostrate before Osiris; then she raised her grey eyes and continued, "What more fair and lovely sight does all the world contain than a ray of sunlight on a lily leaf?"

Mr. Freake clasped his hands and smiled delightedly.

"None!" he exclaimed, "none; a violet in a hedge-row holds a glimpse of heaven for us. Why cannot we have towns now," he went on, as some disconnected thought struck him, "as the early Florentines had, with garden strips and trees between each house, with here and there wide spaces where men might behold clear skies and pure."

"But just think," said Newton Marrix,

in a most commonplace manner, "over what a space London would necessarily be stretched in that case; it would take us as many hours then to get from place to place as it does minutes now."

"But is time our only object?"

"It is a great object to most people. Now-a-days we hurry from week to week, and from month to month, breathless through all our days."

"Is this wise and well?" said Mr. Freake, in a pathetic tone.

"It may not be, but it is a necessity."

"Alas! we grow more and more like soulless machines."

"Not while art remains to us," said Mrs. Stonex Stanning.

"Mr. Phillips is painting a study which he calls the 'Beggar Maid,'" said Newton Marrix, when Mr. Freake had wandered in a hopeless way down the room, and stood

finally before one of Charles Meyrons' etchings of old Paris. "I wish you could see the picture."

"Perhaps Mr. Phillips will let me some day."

"I shall be delighted," said the artist, blushing and stammering, for he wondered if his hostess would very much mind climbing up four pair of stairs to his attic studio.

As Mrs. Stonex Stanning spoke, she saw that a child of genius had just entered the room. This was Lucius Martyn, the poet. Nature had certainly endowed him richly, even if the Muses had not, as some of his friends hinted. He was tall and lithe, his face was handsome, yet pale and wasted. He wore a velvet coat and ruffles.

He was a protégé of Mrs. Stonex Stanning's, to whom his last volume, "The Death of Dear Days," was dedicated. The

book had produced a sensation in the æsthetic circles, and caused attention of a certain kind in the literary world. He was certainly a genius, stranded, perhaps, on the sands of a fashionable morbidness, but one who would come all right in a decade of time.

“Ah! Mr. Martyn,” said Mrs. Stonex Stanning, when the poet approached her slowly, for he never was guilty of a quick, ungraceful movement in his life. “We have just been having a discussion on pictures. This is a young artist, Mr. Marcus Phillips, who is painting the ‘Beggar Maid.’ I am going to see his studio some day.”

The poet bowed. A faint smile crossed his wasted face.

“I should like to share the pleasure of your visit,” he said.

"I will be happy to see you," replied Marcus.

"Poets," said Mr. Freake, who rejoined the little group at that moment, "are not always the best critics of pictures. Too often their imaginations run riot with their judgments. Some item, let us say a ruddy leaf in a landscape, or a moss-grown bough by the pathway, or a wild flower hid among the grass in the foreground, produces in their minds an illusion which they are incapable of subduing, but which gives to the painting they criticise an undeserved value which overlooks grave faults and inharmonious blemishes it may possibly contain."

This speech was not at all *apropos*, but Mr. Freake never took such matters into consideration for a moment. He always expressed the thoughts which came to his

mind, it was quite immaterial whether the subject was suitable or not. Anything he had to say at any time was always worth hearing, he considered.

"We are children of emotion," said Lucius Martyn, in reply to Mr. Freake's remark.

"And so, in judging a picture, attribute your own feelings to the artist's inspiration, which is a total mistake."

"Perhaps," said the poet, a little wearily.

"And painters seldom have poets for critics," Marcus Phillips remarked.

"Nor have we novelists either," said Newton Marrix. "Our reviewers are the dry bones of the profession—men who have magnificent pasts before them, as Heinrich Heine once said, and who consider it their duty to sacrifice young authors as holocausts upon the altars of their vengeance."

"I never read reviews," said the poet.
"What does it matter what the outside world thinks of one's work? It cannot understand it. When my friends, fulfilling their true office, tell me of unpleasant things which the press has said, I always think of poor Walter Savage Landor's words, 'The worms must have eaten us before it is rightly known what we are. It is only when we are skeletons that we are boxed and ticketed, and prized and shown.'"

"How well and truly said!" replied Mrs. Stonex Stanning.

"Yes," said Lucius Martyn; "it has the sad, sweet beauty of decay in its lines."

He had raised both hands in speaking, and then let them drop suddenly, with a gesture expressive of utter abandonment and weariness.

Just then Miss Raven, the violinist, came up to Mrs. Stonex Stanning.

"I have just been having my music-lesson," she said, "and then I came in to you for some tea."

She was a fair-faced girl, with hair of dead gold, and eyes that were bright from the exuberance of youth and joyousness.

"I am so glad you did," replied the hostess; "and how has your lesson progressed?"

"Oh, very well; I have just been going over Chopin's funeral march; it is very delightful. Ah, how do you do, Mr. Marrix?" she continued, recognising the young author.

"Where have you left your violin?" he asked—"your soul, you used to call it."

"In the hall."

"May I bring it up by-and-by? If you are not too tired, perhaps you will play us something."

Mrs. Stonex Stanning looked at her entreatingly and smiled.

"Yes, I shall ; I will play your favourite movement from Pacini," she said, turning to her hostess. "Did I tell you I am going to play at one of the *dilettante* circle concerts? You will all come and hear me, of course?"

"Of course," they answered in chorus.

The drawing-room had grown more crowded ; some one had sat down to the piano, and was playing the "Qui Tollis" from Mozart's *Twelfth Mass*, and several notables had come into the room. Eccinia, the Greek conspirator, who wore a crimson velvet skull-cap crowning his long blue-black locks, had entered with old Lady Snarebrook, around whom gossip threw a halo of interest and faded romance from the fact of her knowing Louis Philippe, "not wisely, but too well," as Lady Ever-

fair whispered. The Dowager Lady Snarebrook was yet a handsome and dignified old woman. Nature had done much for her, and where the kindly mother stopped art took up the work.

Count Basano had come too, for Mrs. Stonex Stanning loved foreigners. He was an old Roman noble, with a merry twinkle in his dark eyes; he bowed with the grace of a past generation, and invariably carried a pinchbeck snuff-box, presented him by Pio Nono; he wore a faded velvet coat with the air of a senator's toga. He was a connoisseur in all things relating to art, and from his general air of decay and age might have been mistaken for an object of *virtu*.

A fashionable authoress and editoress was present, and one or two young actors of the new school, the *prima donna* of English ballad-singers, and a dramatic

reader. It was altogether a goodly group, and decidedly picturesque.

As it was the first West End "at home" Marcus Phillips assisted at, he was delighted to look upon so many celebrities, and charmed with all of them.

"What a noble head that Greek has!" said Marcus Phillips to the poet. "I should like to paint him. You would recognize his nationality in any crowd."

"Probably," replied Lucius Martyn, wearily.

He had sunk into a low chair in an attitude of languor, and passed his hand across his brow as if seeking to rouse himself from a dream.

"Are you not well?" said the painter.

"Well! How can anyone, possessing as I do the nervous and artistic temperament, be well, while the world lies aweary."

"What is the matter with him and the

world now, I wonder?" thought the artist, but he discreetly held his peace.

"I am sick of the bitterness of things too sweet," said the poet, presently; an absent, flickering smile played upon his pale face, his eyes fixed themselves in dreamy vacancy.

"I am sorry," said Marcus, sympathetically, not very well knowing what else to say, and beginning to think, from all he heard during the afternoon, that the world was wrong, and certainly in a bad way.

"I am glad that you are sorry," said Lucius Martyn, in a desponding tone, "though I do not know why you should be; but I rejoice, because sorrow mellows the heart, and subdues the juvenescence of youth, as time softens and harmonises the glaring colours in a fresh canvas."

"But don't you think it a pity the freshness of youth should go?" asked Marcus

Phillips, wondering still more at what he heard.

“Certainly not. If one but thinks deeply on life, no freshness can remain to the thinker. Freshness is but ignorance. Happiness comes from the inexperience of life.”

The poet sighed very sadly indeed, and laid his head back on the soft cushions of the chair with languid grace.

“Who is that foreign-looking old man?” asked Miss Raven of her hostess, both of whom were now at the far end of the room.

“That is a dear old friend of mine, Count Basano.”

“Ah! he is dressed so badly, I thought he must be some one in particular. How he talks and gesticulates! He looks to me all hands and eyes.”

“He is the last representative of an old line.”

"He looks ancient enough for the purpose."

"Come over until I introduce you. He is a great musical critic. I am sure you will be delighted with the old man."

"If so, I hope the delight may be mutual."

"Can you doubt it for an instant?"

And the ladies went up and spoke to Count Basano.

"Shall we go, Marc?" said Newton Marrix, joining his friend just then. "Let us get away, and have a long walk and a smoke, and come home in the gloaming."

"Wait a moment, old man. Miss Raven has just taken up the violin; don't let us go yet. See, who is that playing the piano accompaniment?"

"That is Hal Vector; a very good fellow. You must know him; a genius, too. We are all geniuses here, Marc. You

breathe the atmosphere of the gods."

"Listen," said the artist, interrupting his friend's flow of eloquence, and looking down the crowded room to where the young violinist stood.

The first notes of Pacini's weird, sweet music sounded through the room; the great hum ceased suddenly, all heads turned to where Miss Raven stood by the great, square piano, on whose upraised lid the picture of Alcestis rising from the shadows of Hades glowed in gorgeous colours.

When the music ceased, there was a faint clapping of hands, and a general outburst of admiration. Count Basano ran over to Miss Raven, and whispered something to her. She smiled, nodded, and took up the violin once more. Then she commenced Chopin's "Ave Maria."

Clear, full, and sweet the notes rang

above the heads of the listeners; then came a few wild, plaintive chords like the cry of a soul in darkness for help and light; there was no sound or movement in the room, the notes rose and fell with a wondrous charm, a spell had fallen on all; then the amen came like a farewell prayer, and the last chords trembled into breathless silence.

"Ah! brava," Count Basano called out, "bella, bellissima; brava, signora mia," and, going up to Miss Raven, he took hold of her hand and kissed it with the air of a courtier.

"It is divine," murmured Lucius Martyn, from his low chair. "It is the breathing of a soul new-born, and all lovely in its nudity," and he closed his eyes and sighed heavily.

Marcus Phillips looked at him with sympathy; there was something in the

poet which, in spite of his languor, interested the artist much.

"I think we had better go now, Marc," said Newton Marrix, once more; "it's getting so decidedly hot."

The two friends made their way slowly through the room until they came to where Mrs. Stonex Stanning stood.

"We are going," said Newton.

"Must you really go so soon?"

"I fear we must."

"I am always at home on Thursdays through the season, Mr. Phillips."

"And what day may I hope for the pleasure of your visit to my studio?"

"Oh! let me see—say Saturday afternoon; will that be convenient?"

"Thanks, quite convenient."

The hostess reached out her hand, and gave one brief glance into his eyes; then they passed on.

When the door of Mrs. Stonex Stanning's house closed upon them, Newton Marrix took his friend's arm, and said,

"I congratulate you, old man; this is a red-letter day in your life."

"How so?"

"Why, because Mrs. Stonex Stanning has promised to come and see your pictures, of course."

"It's very kind of her."

"It's a piece of luck many a young artist would give a year of his life for. If she likes them, and mentions them to her friends, and perhaps gets one of them exhibited at some gallery, you may bid good-bye to your pot-boilers for ever and a day. She is the patron saint of all young artists; her father was a painter—I may add an unsuccessful one—and she

understands all about the craft and the drudgery of its ways."

"She is very kind, I am sure," replied Marcus, and then he thought once more of the four flights of stairs to be mounted before the attic studio could be reached; and then the memory of its general bareness came on him unpleasantly.

"Will you come on Saturday, New, and help me to make all things square before Mrs. Stonex Stanning comes?"

"All right, I will," replied the rising author. "We shall both do the honours, then. I hail Saturday as an auspicious day in your career; we shall have a burnt offering of cigars to invoke the favour of the gods. Try a weed, old man."

They smoked in silence for some time, walking down the old Kensington Road in the gathering twilight of this soft April

evening, Marcus Phillips with his head raised watching the purple shadows stealing across the sky, drinking in pleasure from the freshness of the budding trees and the sense of early spring that came to him in the soft, fragrant air, Newton Marrick with his eyes down, thinking out the plot of a novel on which he had been working for six consecutive hours that day.

"Well, Marc," he said at last, "what do you think of Mrs. Stonex Stanning's at home?"

"I enjoyed it much. There were several faces there that interested me. I do not know, New, if you study physiognomy. I have all my life, not theoretically, you know, but naturally," replied the artist.

"Indeed

'His only books
Were women's looks,
And folly is all they taught him.'"

"No, I don't mean women's looks in particular, and not at all in the sense you mean. But I know of nothing more interesting than to watch the faces of people, it always gives you the index to their true personality. Words may deceive you, but faces never."

"Ah! my boy, there are some people who go about through life with masks, painted masks no more like their true faces than heaven to Hades."

"That may be, yet the mask must and does slip off occasionally, and when we catch but a glimpse of the real face we are startled into recognition of it by the contrast it presents to its covering."

"Perhaps you are right; but again, there are some people with features as impenetrable as those of a sphinx, hard and cold as a piece of grey stone."

"Even so they do not cease to be repre-

sentatives of characters and minds. To my thinking every face is a book. Some are not worth reading, others are poems full of a heart-sweet melody, others sad and full of yearnings they can scarcely express or understand, others are fraught with violent passions or full of a miserable story. Some have their life-histories printed in large, clear type so that all who look may read; with others it is written in a language that few can understand, and takes time and patience to study. I being an artist am quick to feel and see these things. A sudden glance, the turn of an eye, an expression come and gone in a second serves me as an index and synopsis to the whole volume."

"Are you never misled?"

"I have never been yet. I suppose it is a gift I have of translating expressions as some have the gift of languages."

"I must say," said the author, "I have never minded visages much. I find that a handsome face is always pleasant to look at of course."

"There I cannot agree with you, if you mean by a handsome face perfect features ; on the other hand, I have seen the plainest faces become perfectly lovely under the influence of certain feelings. The beauty of a face all depends on the reflection of the mind. Had you watched Count Basano's face this evening whilst he listened to the 'Ave Maria,' you would better understand my meaning ; every chord gave it a fresh meaning, each beautiful, with a childlike simplicity and full of emotion. Take another face we know, Capri Dankers', her expression is never the same for three consecutive minutes. That is what makes it so difficult to paint. I no sooner strive to catch one expression than it is gone before

I look up from the canvas again, merged into another and different look as thoughts blend one with the other in unconscious harmony. But a face which interested me much this evening was——”

“Mrs. Stonex Stanning’s?”

“No, Lucius Martyn’s. There is a story under that cover which it will take time to read.”

“He is a good sort, I daresay,” answered Newton Marrix, carelessly, “but he always seems to me as if he were playing a part; he poses on the stage of society. Ever ready for his *rôle*, and never forgetting for a moment that the eyes of an audience are upon him. There is too much art about him, yet it has become to him almost nature. He does not know, I’ll swear, when he is his real self, and when he is but the personation of some ideal to whom he strives to live up.”

"Do you remember what Fabian de Franci says in the 'Corsican Brothers'?" asked the artist falling into an Irving-like attitude, and raising his right arm he let it fall suddenly and stiffly. "'What you in cities gain in art, you lose in nature'"

"Lucius Martyn has."

"Do you know, New, what he meant by saying he was 'sick of the bitterness of things too sweet'?"

"It's some set phrase meaning nothing in particular."

"When I expressed sympathy for his sad state he declared he was glad I was sorry. I like him somehow, though I do not quite understand him."

"My dear boy, these are set phrases made up and rehearsed weeks before with corresponding expressions and attitudes practised before a glass."

"No, you must not say that," replied the

author. "You take away the flavour and freshness with one fell blow."

"Do I? Oh, you will soon get enough of that. You will hear the same words and phrases used again and again on every available occasion until you feel that it begins to pall."

"Yet it amuses one while it is fresh."

"His phrases are very much like his book, and that was awful rubbish; each page a little island of letter-press in a wide sea of toned paper. Didn't the reviews rub their hands in glee over the opportunity it gave them of hacking him to pieces?"

Evidently the poet's misfortune was a cause of enjoyment to Newton Marrix, who laughed agreeably as he finished the last sentence.

"He is an awfully good fellow, you

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know," he said, presently, "an awfully good fellow, but a great idiot."

And taking out another cigar he lit it and smoked in peace.

CHAPTER V.

THE BEGGAR MAID'S PICTURE.

THE day appointed for Mrs. Stonex Stanning's promised visit to Marcus Phillips' studio came at last. The young artist counted the days: Mrs. Stonex Stanning and her friend would be the first visitors who honoured his studio with what he might call a private view.

Newton Marrix arrived early on that Saturday afternoon to help his friend "to do the honours," as he said, in his attic studio.

"Now then, Marc," said the practical young author, as he entered the painting-room, "let us see what is to be done," and immediately he divested himself of his coat as a preparation for labour, flung it on a chair, and put his hat on top of it. Then he folded his arms and gave a sharp, quick glance round the room.

"I will clear away all these palettes and paint-pots in a second or two," said the artist, looking down at the mess which surrounded him; for he had been working at the "Beggar Maid" picture until his friend came.

"It is almost time for you to have finished, old man, they may come early."

"We must place the 'Beggar Maid' in the best light," said Marcus, waving a brush which he held in his right hand in the air.

"Here she is in her own proper person,"

said Capri, who had come up the stairs three steps at a time, and now stood like a picture framed by the doorway. A flush brightened her cheeks, her dark eyes sparkled with animation, her black hair, with its shade of dusky gold, crowned a face that an early Greek sculptor might have given to a goddess.

“Here I am, Marc, and I have come to help you to clear up the studio before the visitors arrive. A woman’s eye can work wonders sometimes, Mr. Marrix.”

She had heard from the artist that Mrs. Stonex Stanning and Lucius Martyn were to come and view the “Beggar Maid” picture.

“Certainly a woman’s eye can do more work than two men’s hands,” said the author.

“It is very good of you to come,” said Marcus Phillips, his face lighting up with

pleasure at sight of her ; then he looked from her back to the canvas.

He had succeeded in painting almost a perfect portrait, yet there was a subtle look in her face which escaped him ; he saw this, and sighed impatiently.

"I cannot paint you as you really are," he said, regretfully, touching the picture lightly with his brush.

"You are ungrateful to your muse," she answered him. "I am satisfied with it, and, when my woman's vanity is appeased, it should be the best criterion that your work is genuinely good."

She came over and stood beside the artist. He looked into her face and smiled.

"You are right, Capri," he said.

"It's the best thing by a long way you have ever painted, old man," said Newton Marrix ; "but you are too much of the

true artist ever to feel satisfied with your work." And, so saying, the author came over to where Marcus Phillips and his model stood, and all three stared in silence at the picture for some time.

Capri was the first to speak.

"I wonder what I shall think of it in forty years to come?" she said. "It is my living, breathing self now. Perhaps then I shall put as much paint on my cheeks as there is now on the canvas, and sigh for the youth I have left behind with as much regret as I feel impatience with it now." And she laughed merrily, showing her even rows of white teeth. For an instant a serious look came into her dark, liquid eyes.

"Why trouble about the future?" said Newton.

"Just so," answered Capri. "Adieu to moralizing. Let us commence to work."

"What shall we do?" said the author, in shirt sleeves. "Command your most humble subjects, Queen Cophetua."

"Will you obey me in everything?"

"Most willingly."

"First remove the 'Beggar Maid' to Marc's sanctum, out of the dust, and all the pot-boilers and studies must follow."

"Yes, your majesty."

"I have spoken to the landlady, and she has graciously consented to lend a square of Turkey carpet, positively its first appearance in this room, and for one afternoon only."

"A Turkey carpet!" said both the friends at once, and Newton Marrix gave a long, low whistle.

"Yes, and a new one, too; and here it comes," she continued, as the maid came toiling upstairs with a roll of carpet.

"Capital idea!" said Newton, seizing

hold of it, and dragging it into the room as anxiously as if it were a half-drowned body he were pulling in from the sea.

"Now clear away the palettes and pots," commanded Capri. "Ah! Marc, how untidy you are! You are walking on your palette-knife and best brush."

Newton Marrix took the pictures into the bed-room, whilst the artist cleared the floor of all the paraphernalia that lay about, and then the three lifted the carpet into the centre of the studio, and commenced spreading it out.

"It covers a multitude of stains and blemishes," said Marcus Phillips.

"And stains are deadly sins to eyes polite," answered Capri.

"Now where is that broken vase. I have got some primroses to fill it with. Ah! here it is; but it is filled with tin-tacks, buttons, and shirt-studs, and sleeve-

links. Ah! you poor bachelor. How helpless and untidy the best of you lone male creatures would be, only you have the fairer portion of humanity to look after you. Every one of you would go to rack and ruin."

"So he would," said Newton. "I shall forswear bachelor life, now that I have heard that homily."

"None of your irony, Mr. Author. You literary men always make the worst of husbands. I only wonder women can ever have anything to say to you."

"Your majesty is severe."

"Truthful, you should say. Now this piece of terra-cotta looks antique," she said, dusting the urn-shaped vase.

In a moment she had arranged the bright, fresh primroses in it, and fixed it skilfully on a bracket against the wall so that the side which was cracked and bro-

ken was completely hidden. Then Capri got down from the chair on which she stood to arrange it, and stood contemplating the effect of her work.

"It looks stunning," said Newton Marrix. "How bright the primroses look in that old red vase!"

"Yes, it will be all right, if Mrs. Stonex Stanning does not ask to examine it, and find it has a broken back, poor thing. You see there are two sides to everything, my friend."

"I will take care of that."

"Now, Marc, where are your chalk studies?" she asked.

"In the portfolio," answered the artist. "What are you going to do with them?"

"I am going to hang 'Hercules,' 'Venus de Medici,' and some others of them on the wall. It will look artistic, you know."

"Good idea. You are full of them this

afternoon," said the author. "Come, Marc, my boy, produce the studies. Why, by-and-by we shall not recognize your den."

"I shall have transformed it to a place of delight," said Capri.

"Your presence is sufficient to do that," answered Newton.

"So now you are paying compliments; a minute ago you were ironical. Oh! perfidy, thy name is man."

"That is a new reading of an old phrase."

"And a more correct one. Because Shakespeare was a man, he said, 'perfidy, thy name is woman,' and pandered to the base prejudices of his sex."

"I am silenced."

"If such a thing was possible, it would be a boon."

"Now that is unkind. Let me hang the

chalk studies for you," he said, handing them to her.

Capri, however, jumped on a chair, and with some tin tacks, which she held between her red lips, commenced to hang them with an artistic regularity.

"There," she said, "I shall place the 'Dice Thrower' next Apollo Belvedere, and Venus beside the Theses. How do they look?"

"Very well," said the author from the other end of the room, where he was dusting a plaster cast arm and foot, and bringing them from their obscurity into a more prominent position.

Marcus Phillips did not speak, but stood closely watching the subtle grace of Capri's limbs as she raised her arms above her head, or turned her face round to address a question, or bent her shapely neck. Whatever movements she gave she fell

into poses classic and tender in their grace.

"Now, Marc, bring out your pictures and we have done," she said.

The two young men carried out the easels and set the pictures on them in the best light. There were two sea-scenes intended for pot-boilers, but reserved for exhibition this afternoon. Also an interior sketch of Canterbury Cathedral, which the artist was loth to part with even when his shillings were few, because the painting was from a sketch he had made whilst his old theatrical company stayed in the cathedral town. There was a view of the lonely Yorkshire moors abloom with purple heather, tinged here and there with ruddy gold from the rays of an autumn sun going down in crimson glory behind a crag that suddenly rose bare and grey in the midst of the wild loveliness of the scene.

This was also a recollection of his theatrical days. There were some minor studies too of river scenes and spring mornings on the mountains, and twilight on the hills, and sunsets on the sea, all in various stages of development, and all more or less touched with that subtle beauty which was destined to make them live.

Last of all came the picture of the "Beggar Maid" fresh from the brush. It lent a glow of beauty to the whole room, this portrait of Capri, with its dark, liquid eyes, its pale olive complexion, and its black hair with an under-shade of dusky gold.

The studio indeed seemed transformed : the deep rich colours of the Turkey carpet brightened the place wonderfully ; the great bunch of yellow primroses in their terra cotta vase glowed against the background of faded wall-paper ; the chalk studies, fixed where they looked to best ad-

vantage in a spot sure to attract the first glance of the visitor, looked wonderfully artistic.

The two sea-scenes rested on the chimney piece, with the plaster cast arm between them, the other pictures hanging against the walls; altogether the studio presented a most picturesque effect.

The three friends stood at the far end of the room, surveying it critically, Newton Marrix with his head on one side like a meditative canary, Capri's quick eyes travelling from spot to spot, striving to see what she could suggest or change, Marcus looking steadfastly at the picture of the "Beggar Maid."

"I think we cannot do any more," said the author, "except to burn some pastilles; it is the perfection of art to minister to all the senses at once."

"Ah, Marc," said Capri, leaning against

the wall, with her arms hanging downwards, in an attitude of listless repose, "I wonder, when you become a respectable artist—that is, of course, when you have plenty of money, and are famous, and have a Persian carpet, not lent by any obliging landlady, but all your own—will your studio give you half the pleasure this one does now?"

She had turned her dark eyes questioningly to his face.

"I doubt if it will, Capri," he answered at once, smiling at the earnestness with which she put the question. "I am quite happy now in my present state."

"And we all are hopeful for the future," put in the rising author.

"There is pleasure, after all, in struggling—don't you think so, Marrix?" Marcus asked his friend.

"Yes, when it is not prolonged; but a

continued struggle, my boy, is exhausting and death-dealing in its hopelessness. Once the heart gets overcharged with the bitterness of life and disappointment, no after-success can give it its old health and vigour again."

"I think you are right," said Capri, a thoughtful, serious expression coming into her eyes, that now looked black under the down-turned lashes.

"I know all about struggling," said the young author, folding his arms across his breast in a pose that would have suited a hero, whilst he laughed bitterly, yet triumphantly, like one who had conquered much. "It makes me shudder to think of the petty hardships, and worries, and cares gone by, the weary task of trying to force your name under the eyes of a public that wishes to remain blind to it because it has no interest in you or your existence,

the articles and papers declined, without thanks very often, from newspaper and magazine editors, the weary, patient waiting on the decision of publishers, the unkind criticism of reviewers because one is young and unknown ; it makes me sick to think of it. I only wonder how one can survive it all ; but I suppose young shoulders are made to bear much."

"One thing they don't bear is a load of patience," Capri put in, a saucy, merry look coming into her face.

"Patience only comes with age," said Marcus Phillips, sagely.

"Then I wish I were old," said Capri, with one of those sudden changes which formed the most interesting trait in her character. "I have no patience with myself or fate, and sometimes I hate both. Fate is so slow about bringing me what I want, or I am so slow about

obtaining it, that I grow sick of waiting."

"And what may your particular need be?" asked Newton Marrix, half amused, but wholly interested by her earnestness.

"Mine is the want common to all men and women—money. Metaphorically speaking, I have cried out to Dame Fortune until I am hoarse, and I supplicate in vain, for she is often deafest when we cry loudest," Capri said, holding out both her hands and gesticulating as she frequently did in moments of excitement. "The fickle jade is deaf and blind to me," she went on, "and yet——"

"And yet?" repeated the author, interrogatively, as he watched her bright eyes flash and her face glow with expression.

"I know I shall be rich some day," she answered. "All things come to those who wait."

She dropped her arms suddenly with a

melodramatic movement that had much grace in it, and walked straight up to the easel on which her portrait lay, and smiled at it with a pleasure and vanity that had something childlike in its simplicity.

"There," she said, changing her tone again in a minute and facing Marcus Phillips, "it's four o'clock."

"The clock downstairs is fast."

"Well, your guests may arrive any minute, and you have to wash your hands and put on your best coat. I am off."

"Not so soon."

"Yes, I must go. Your landlady will send you up tea at five o'clock, she told me. She seems quite proud of having distinguished people calling on her lodger; but I think she will never forgive them if they do not come in a carriage with prancing horses for the edification and benefit of her neighbours. Carriages don't come

every day to Fitzroy Street, you know."

"Cannot you wait?" asked Marcus.

The girl shook her head in answer.

"Do, Capri; I should like you to see Mrs. Stonex Stanning and the poet Lucius Martyn."

"No, I think I had better go. I should certainly like to get behind some curtain and hear all they had to say about my appearance, like Peg Woffington in 'Masks and Faces.' Do you remember? But then they would be sure to discover me, and it would be all like the screen scene in the 'School for Scandal.'"

"A listener would be sure to hear something good of herself in this case," said Newton Marrix, gallantly.

"Would she? I am doubtful of that," cried Capri, not the less pleased with his compliment for all her pretended want of faith in its sincerity.

"You had better wait and learn from experience."

"I would like to borrow a cap and apron from the maid and bring in tea, only I fear they would recognize me," she said, laughing at the suggestion; "but it would not be safe to try it, I fear."

"I wish you would give them the chance of comparing you with the picture. Will you not stay?" asked the artist once more.

"No, I must really go; but will you both come to-night and tell me all they say?"

"We shall," said Newton Marrix, readily promising for both.

"Very well; a rivederci, miei amici," she said, making a graceful little gesture and extending a hand to each. "Recollect, Marc, the foundation of your fortune, like my own, depends on my face."

"Then," said Newton Marrix, "he is

sure to have luck," and, bending down half playfully, he kissed her finger tips.

"What a pretty speech!" she answered, well pleased, and she gave a peal of rippling laughter.

"Now, Marc, you may kiss the other hand, or they might grow jealous."

The artist bent down his head and touched her delicate little hand with his lips. As he did so a pleasant thrill ran through her frame, and the blood came quickly into his cheeks.

Newton Marrix let go the hand he held, and went over to the opposite end of the room to move the easel nearer the light, a proceeding which it suddenly dawned on him was necessary to the picture: and he found the canvas required so much re-adjusting that he had not settled it until he heard Capri's quick, light tread descending the stairs.

The street door had scarcely closed upon the girl when a handsome Victoria drove up, and Mr. Freake, Count Basano, Lucius Martyn, and finally Mrs. Stonex Stanning, got out.

The footman gave a terrific ring at the bell, which warned the friends upstairs that the guests had arrived, and the peal was followed by a resounding knock that was heard half-way down the street, and had the effect of making the maid-of-all-work, who was endowed with a nervous temperament, jump half a foot off the ground-floor, and smash a china plate she happened to have in her too sensitive fingers at that "very percise moment," as she afterwards said in describing the accident to her mistress, who was unsympathetic enough to scold.

"Here they are, old boy," said Newton Marrix, in a whisper, as Mrs. Stonex

Stanning, followed by her three friends, ascended the fourth flight of stairs.

Marcus went out to receive them. It was a trying moment for him.

"Ah! Mr. Phillips," said Mrs. Stonex Stanning, in her soft, musical voice, as she extended her hand to him, "I am come to play the critic, and I have brought three friends with me."

Mrs. Stonex Stanning acted as the advance guard; Marcus could hear the footsteps of the others ascending. It seemed to him at that moment as if a dozen critics had come to sit in judgment on his "Beggar Maid."

"I am very glad to see you. It is kind of you to come," said the artist, frankly; a pleasant light came into his honest blue eyes, a light that did not escape Mrs. Stonex Stanning's sharp glance.

"If we are formidable in numbers we

are not in judgment," said Mr. Freake, as he entered the room, and looked into the artist's face, as if he could see through and through him.

"Ah! bless me," Count Basano gasped, as he shambled into the studio, breathless, after his ascent; he put his right hand on his heart, and sank into the chair nearest him.

"Ah! my children," he said, after a second or two, as he extended his hand first to the artist, and then to Newton Marrix, "I do grow old every day."

"Time mellows the soul and sweetens the fruit of wisdom," Lucius Martyn remarked, to no one in particular, as he slowly, calmly, and with a totally unruffled air, strode into the room some moments after his friends.

"Ah! grazie, grazie, mio amico," said the count, rising and bowing, for it

seemed to him something polite had been said regarding his advanced years, though he could not tell very well what it was.

The poet took no notice of the count's florid bow whatever, but walked, without looking to his right or left, straight to the easel on which the picture of the "Beggar Maid" hung, and, putting his long, lean, lithe arm half way round his slender body, he rested his head upon his left hand, and stood before the canvas in a critical attitude.

"The picture is quite fresh; I have been working at it until an hour ago—nor is it quite finished yet," Marcus said to Mrs. Stonex Stanning, placing a chair for her before, but at some distance from, the easel, in the best position.

Lucius Martyn drew aside, and Count Basano came over and stood behind Mrs. Stonex Stanning's chair, putting up his

double-barrel eye-glasses with deliberation and care, as if he expected them to do their duty on this occasion.

Mr. Freake viewed it from different parts of the room. No one yet spoke. It was a critical time for the young artist. He thought the silence would never end, yet he did not dare to break it, but stood there mentally counting the seconds and hazarding guesses as to what was passing through their minds. At last he ventured to look at Mrs. Stonex Stanning's face, hoping to read her judgment there.

A calm, thoughtful expression rested in her eyes; as they met his, a new light came into them which he yet scarce understood; the first faint dawn of a radiance which might brighten and warm her whole life. She lowered her lashes, and her mind went back to the picture before her, from which it had evidently strayed for the moment.

"Mr. Marrix, this is a finished picture," she said, decisively, with the air of one whose opinions were invariably accepted, "the face is life-like, the colouring very lovely."

She had given the cue, then they all spoke.

"It is most beautiful to look upon," said the poet, as if he were continuing some remarks previously addressed to his hearers. A faint smile crossed his weary face, and his friends, watching him, knew that the picture gave him pleasure.

"The drapery reminds one of the earlier manner of Giovanni di Masaccio," remarked Mr. Freake, critically, shading his eyes with his outstretched hand.

The count was last to speak.

Said he, "This is no fancy sketch; it is alive; it is a portrait; she is beautiful; where is she?" He raised both his hands

gesticulatively, and looked around the room, as if expecting to meet the fair original of the picture before him.

"Look at the eyes," said Newton Marx, promptly, to save his friend the trouble of replying to Count Basano's question.

"They are most sweet and tender," replied Lucius Martyn; and then he sighed, and let his right arm fall to his side in a helpless, listless way, as if that limb were minus bones.

There was another pause. Mr. Freake gave a preparatory cough, ran his fingers through his long hair, and commenced in a tone that left no doubt of the high repute in which he held his own opinions on art.

"Of course, Mr. Phillips, this picture shows promise," he commenced, "I must say great promise, yet there are some evidences about it which mark it as the work

of a young man; for a modern canvas there is too close a following of Annibale Caracci's style in the posture of the arms and the general contour. Now-a-days we look in vain for the soft, sweet outline which renders Correggio's works things of glad beauty, in vain for the harmonious tints that consecrated the canvases of the great Veronian master."

Mr. Freake, as he concluded, extended one hand towards the "Beggar Maid" picture, and the other towards his hearers, at whom he looked as if expecting them to second his learned opinions. For the first time in Mr. Freake's experience Mrs. Stonex Stanning paid no attention whatever to his remarks.

"The hair is wonderfully managed; the undertone of gold is beautiful," she said, fixing her eyes on the picture.

She felt quite well, though she did not

see him, that Marcus Phillips had his eyes turned to her face; she knew that her last words had given him gratification and pleasure.

"It is all good," said the count, in broken English. He had been staring at the work all the while through his double-barrel glasses. "For a young artist, it is good, very good. You will have success," he said, turning to Marcus Phillips. "I know the work of what you call genius when I see it, for I have lived a long time, and I have seen many young men begin, and I always know if they will do good work in the world."

"You give me great hope, count," said the artist, watching the old man's animated face, and seeing his dark eyes bright with animation as he spoke.

"There was one young man in Rome ten years ago," the Italian went on. "His

name was Paolo Contadini. His maestro said he never would do anything, for he dreamt all day, and would only draw things from what he called his mind, his brain. But I say, 'Let him have his dream, he will wake some day;' and at last it came. It was but Endymion; but ah!" said the count, raising his eyebrows, and shrugging up his shoulders, "that Endymion. I shall never forget it as long as ever I live. He was there again that shepherd, Endymion; he was divine. He would be great man, but he died, that boy," and the old man sighed.

"To make room for other great men, I suppose," said Newton Marrix, in his matter-of-fact way. "It is a wise law of Nature that some of us must go to the wall, or under ground, to make room for others. Consoling, is it not?"

Count Basano shrugged his shoulders. He did not understand.

"I always think," commenced the poet, in a dreamy tone, while a weary expression gave a strange look to his weird face, "that death in the bloom time is little less than divine. There is a grandeur in bidding farewell to earth whilst the purple blood beats rapturously in the veins of youth ; whilst the fragrant freshness of life's morning crowns the earlier days, and promises a vista of unknown delights which the mid-day can never realize ; whilst love, and hope, and ripening life, and wakening passions make all things sweet to sight and sense, this sudden passing into a labyrinth of dark, cold shadows, this rest, wrapped in the heaviness of brown clay, is a joy which but the blest can know ; a fate which men thought,

in the earlier days, came alone to those beloved of gods."

They listened to him gravely, for there was some subtle force in the poet's words that always compelled attention from his hearers, whether they were willing or not to give it, and irrespective of their private opinions. At last Marcus Phillips, who was interested in the poet, said,

"But those expressions are against all preconceived ideas."

"And preconceived ideas are mere prejudices. Too often fatally false."

Then he paused, looked round him, sighed once, and continued—

"What is more glorious in history than the voluntary life sacrifice to the Eumenides of Cratinus and Aristodemus in the dead days? Friends whom love had bound soul to soul; youths with god-like limbs,

and features perfect as Praxiteles' dream of loveliness, who went to death in their prime for the weal of Athens and the preservation of her people ; and in later times the early deaths of that trinity of divine singers, Shelley, Byron, and Keats before any had matured, and one had even blossomed, seem to make us think the gods have not forgotten their favourites even now."

"Had Byron lived, who knows what he might have done?" said Mr. Freake, speculatively.

"Ah," said Newton Marrix, catching up the same tone, "he might have suppressed 'Don Juan' in his old days, and taken to write homilies in verse."

"What do you think of this moorland, Mrs. Stanning?" asked Marcus, taking the picture from its place on the wall, and holding it up before her for inspection.

The four visitors fixed their eyes on the view of the Yorkshire moors, looking mutely at the prospect it presented of a wide sea of purple heather in the foreground, ruddy-tinted where the sun rays, breaking from excess of light through the clouds, fell upon it in slanting rays of glory.

"It is full of peace," said Mrs. Stonex Stanning; "the freshness of a moorland breeze seems sweeping over it: it is delightfully fresh."

"It brings one face to face with Nature," Mr. Freake remarked.

"Nature is the reflection of God's face," said the poet, clasping his white hands.

"That is why it is ever so happy and eternally peaceful," Mr. Freake responded.

"You have not exhibited, Mr. Phillips?" said Mrs. Stonex Stanning.

"No," answered the artist. "I have

not been fortunate enough to get hung yet."

Mrs. Stonex Stanning thought for a moment, and then said,

"Would you like to exhibit at the Grosvenor Gallery this season?"

Newton Marrix, who overheard the question, could scarcely contain his delight, or restrain himself from answering for his friend. Here was a prospect for Marcus Phillips of which he had scarcely dared to hope.

"There is nothing which I would like better—nothing that would serve me more," the artist answered, readily.

The colour came to his face at the mere thought of this piece of unexpected good luck; the prospect that it would open up for him, the service it would assuredly do him, flashing on him suddenly. Was it possible that this realization of his

ambition could come so soon, that his picture would hang before the public, his name be echoed by the critics and spoken of by the press, his canvas hung among the best masters of a new school?

"I may be able to get you an invitation to exhibit," said Mrs. Stonex Stanning, quietly—"I shall try."

"How can I thank you—how can I tell you all that it may mean for an artist commencing life?" said Marcus Phillips, gratefully.

"I know it all," she answered, remembering her past days, and her father's pictures returned year after year to the hopeless man whom fame had ignored, and fortune mocked to his death-day.

"How easy it is to do a little good sometimes!" she reflected, as she watched the young artist's face, and saw there a bright, hopeful expression, that sought

to thank her more than his words.

Then she cast her eyes round the studio, and for the first time noticed the general bareness of its aspect. It brought back memories of her past life, and spoke to her forcibly of her father and his patient, struggling existence. How he would have regarded anyone who could get his pictures sold or exhibited; he would have blessed him as a heaven-sent messenger. There, in Marcus Phillips' studio, she thought of her early days of deprivation, of the miserable efforts made to support the shabby gentility of life, of the weary struggle to keep up what was called appearances in the eyes of the world, until a man came who offered her his name and fortune, and she became a wife whose heart-love had never once been touched, whose days were hollow and fruitless.

Fate had left her free once more; rich,

fashionable, still young, and fair, but no man's love was sacred and dear to her, no life had yet touched hers with that secret sweet affinity which renders existence one long dream of delight.

With all her talents, her wealth, her troops of friends and acquaintance, she felt herself solitary. Not one of all the throng which daily surrounded her had ever yet moved her, had ever woke her heart from the cold thralldom that held it as a spell, had ever stirred her nature to its depths by that subtle power which men call love.

Some one speaking startled her from her reverie, a voice that seemed to her just then like the key-note to her thoughts, perhaps an answer to the hope just dawning within her.

"It was good and generous of you to come here and see my pictures, Mrs. Stan-

ning," said the artist, in a slow, musical voice that somehow filled her with an unwonted pleasure, and I am most sensible of the kindness of your criticism, believe me."

"I am pleased with your pictures."

"The knowledge of that will help me to do better work," he said, not with the tone of a man who implies a compliment, but with that simplicity which is ever a guarantee of truth.

She looked up at him as he said the last words, a faint colour coming into her cheeks; she made him no reply.

"I think," continued Marcus Phillips, sitting down beside her, "helping young people on is one of the best actions man or woman can do in life."

"A slight service often seems of great magnitude to them."

"Because it is the beginning which is

most difficult. When once a firm footing is made, the remainder of the pathway is comparatively easy; a single success is rare; like begets like," he said, speaking earnestly. His blue eyes were lit with animation.

"But does success mean the end of all things, is there nothing else left to be desired?" she asked him, softly and slowly.

The question came unexpectedly, but he was fortunately saved the trouble of replying, for just then the maid-of-all-work entered the studio with a shining face that spoke volumes for yellow soap, and arrayed for the occasion in a fresh apron and dainty tongue-shaped cap placed on the extremity of a head which nobly disdained a more pronounced badge of serfdom.

She placed a tea-tray on a little three-legged table lent by the landlady for the

evening. Mrs. Stonex Stanning took off her gloves and made tea, and the artist thought the studio had just then a comfortable and, what common-place folk would call, a home-like appearance.

“If only Capri were here,” he thought, “how she would enjoy it all!” But none of those present, except Newton Marrix and himself, knew of her existence; they had never even asked who was the original of his “Beggar Maid.”

The picture lay on the easel opposite where Marcus Phillips sat, so that when he raised his eyes and looked at it now and then it almost seemed to him as if Capri were with them. Thinking of the girl with her Greek face, her hair of dusky gold, and her ruddy, luscious lips, he forgot the presence of the woman before him, and was silent and utterly heedless of Mr. Freake, who held forth on the abomina-

tions of modern machinery and the general hatefulness of the days on which we have fallen, and was sighing pitifully for the honest barbarity of past ages.

Mrs. Stonex Stanning having made tea, and said many agreeable things, stood up from the little table, and the whole party rose at the same time. The pictures had been viewed, Mr. Freake and the poet had each ventilated their ideas, the fragrant tea Marcus's landlady had sent up had been sipped, and there was nothing else for them to do but depart.

The artist and Newton Marrix went down with them to the door, where the Victoria was drawn up in readiness, and the horses prancing, impatiently tossing their heads up and down, so that the silver-mounted harness glistened, and made a pleasant jingling sound. The artist's landlady felt her heart throb with pride as

she looked from behind the curtains of the first-floor windows at the sight. It was something to have lodgers visited by people who came in their own carriages; it was not a thing which happened every day in Fitzroy Street.

"You will remember that I am always at home on Thursdays," said Mrs. Stonex Stanning, as Marcus handed her to the carriage.

"Thanks, I will remember it with pleasure."

Then she gave him her hand, smiled pleasantly, and in another second had gone.

"Well, old man," said Newton Marrix, when they gained the studio, after racing upstairs like schoolboys, "I congratulate you."

"Do you think I shall be asked to exhibit at the Grosvenor, New?"

"Think! A word from Mrs. Stonex Stanning is enough. I am as sure of seeing a picture of yours hanging on the walls of the Grosvenor Gallery this season, as I am that January will follow December."

"How will Capri like it if I send the 'Beggar Maid'?" said Marcus, stopping before the picture meditatively.

"She will be half mad from joy; for, Capri, thy name is vanity! She is a true woman, Marc," said the author, with the air of a sage.

"It is a great chance for me, New. I cannot say how glad I am, but I feel it all the more," said the artist.

"It is luck, my boy. I know you have genius, but what is it without luck? A dull, dead weight that prevents a fellow getting his bread like his less gifted but more happy fellow-mortals. It is all humbug about genius forcing its way to the

front wherever it exists ; impudence is more apt to do that."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it. Ask the successful men and women before the public to-day if they owe their fame to some chance or accident—which is nothing but luck, or to their genius, and they will tell you it is due to the former ; for the genius starves oftentimes in a garret, and is huddled into a pauper's grave, now just as in the olden days. What would Chatterton have been had Horace Walpole given him a helping hand when asked? Would the world have ever heard of Molière or Lully, but for Louis the Fourteenth? Let us have a cigar, Marc, my boy, my nerves are unstrung with all the jargon Freake and the poet talked."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BEGGAR MAID'S FATHER.

IT was almost nine o'clock when Marcus Phillips, accompanied by his friend, ascended the somewhat dark and narrow stairs which led to the rooms occupied by Captain Dankers and his daughter.

The artist knocked at the door when they reached the landing, and heard Capri call out,

"Who's there?—come in," all in one breath.

"We have come to tell you—" Newton commenced as they entered the room.

"All about the critics," interrupted Capri, anxiously.

"Not all," answered the author, laughingly, "for it would be impossible to remember the magnificent things Mr. Freake and the poet said. Like most of the best sayings in daily life, they must be lost to the world for ever."

"They are what you call great guns on art topics, I suppose."

"Yes, great pop-guns," answered the author, flinging himself down on a chair.

Then all three laughed.

"Pa is out," said Capri, as if that fact was far from being disagreeable, and, so saying, she drew a low footstool before the fire, and sat down, clasping her hands across her knees with the air of one who was about to make herself thoroughly happy. Her two friends drew their chairs at either side of her.

The artist was not at all sorry that Captain Dankers was out just then; he felt very comfortable as he lay back in a great arm-chair, the seat of which sank under his weight until it left him in a hollow from which it would be no easy matter to extricate himself by-and-by.

The room looked very cosy seen in the merciful, unsearching light of a dim lamp. The rusty, crimson marine curtains, which it made one cringe to touch, were drawn across the windows; the wide-seated, high-backed, antique sofa, which was a snare and a deception to all who ventured to sit on it, had its favourite chintz covering carefully smoothed out; and though the carpet was sadly thread-bare and showed as much pattern as a piece of over-used blotting-paper, it fell into harmony with its old companions, the horse-hair chairs,

which would have made a tender-limbed child shriek if placed upon them.

Yet, with Capri sitting on a low stool by the hearth, the room had a pleasant and home-like look. The firelight flickered on her dark hair, and turned it to bronze here and there; the ruddy blaze reflected itself on the yellow keys of the open, old-fashioned piano in the near corner, and now and then flashed dimly on the brass bars of the canary's cage hanging between the windows.

Capri had lowered the lamp and placed it at the end of the room on a cheffonier, black with time, that contained many mysterious-looking drawers. On the wall above it hung an old engraving of Arthur, Duke of Wellington; and beneath this picture were two crossed foils, rusty and bent from long service.

"I have good news to tell you, Capri,"

said Marcus Phillips, looking down into the lovely mobile face, noting with an artist's eye the graceful curving lines into which her dress had naturally fallen, and marking the long delicate fingers that interlaced each other as she clasped her knees.

"Good news?" she said, quickly, with one of those childish impulses that gave its greatest charm to her manner. "Tell me all about it, Marc."

"I wish you had been there, Capri."

"So do I," she answered, unclasping her hands and resting her chin upon her palm.

"Mrs. Stonex Stanning was pleased with my pictures, especially with the 'Beggar Maid,' and said many kind things about them, praising all."

"And the poet, the real live fashionable poet, what did he say?"

"Oh," said Newton Marrix, intertwining his fingers in a weird clasp, and looking dramatically wild, "he said the 'Beggar Maid' was all beautiful to look upon."

"Did the poet actually say that?" she asked.

"He did indeed."

"Oh, you will make me too proud ; perhaps he will write a poem about me."

"Ah, who knows indeed ? then you would live for ever," said the author ironically.

"Count Basano, who came also, praised your picture, Capri, and said it was alive," said the artist.

"I am so glad," she answered, her face lighting up with excitement and pleasure.

"I often told you, Marc, my face should be the beginning of your fortune. Am I not a prophetess even in my own country?"

"And with such a good beginning what may not the end be?" the artist asked.

"I hope and trust very fair and bright for you," she replied, with a half abstracted air, looking straight before her into the fire. A little blaze jumped up just then from the smouldering embers and showed a wistful look in her dark eyes.

"And your future?" he said, hesitatingly, and then paused. He would have added, "will it not be bound up with mine?" but the words died on his lips, and Capri repeated after him.

"And my future; I am not at all sure what it will be. I am sometimes half afraid to look forward to it; and yet, and yet I wish these slow days of my present life had passed, and that I had really commenced to live," she said, impatiently beating one of her little feet upon the floor.

"It will all come time enough, believe me, Capri; you are now standing on the brink 'where the brook and river meet.'"

"And looking down I can only see my face shadowed in the rippling waters near me; the tide beyond shows no reflection of any future."

"I hope it may always be as happy as it is now," said Marcus Phillips.

The girl smiled, but made no reply, and Newton Marrix said rather impatiently,

"Don't let us speculate about the future whilst we have good fortune to think of in the present. You have not told all the news, Marc."

"Oh, is there more to be told?" said Capri, starting up, her whole expression changing in a minute. "Tell me the news, the whole news, and nothing but the news, Marc."

"The best was kept for the last," he said.

"How could you sit there moralizing, as

is your wont, poor boy, while you had good news to tell me?"

"It was not I who moralized."

"Have you sold a picture?"

"No."

"Then——"

"Then the news is this. I shall probably be asked to exhibit in the Grosvenor Gallery this season, and if you or the Captain have no objection I shall send the 'Beggar Maid' picture."

Capri jumped to her feet in an instant and flung her plump arms above her head in demonstration of her joy. It was a graceful natural pose; she looked like a Greek figure on a sculptured urn.

"Oh, dear Marc," she cried, aloud, "I could dance for joy, I am so glad. This is good news indeed. How could you have sat there so long, you undemonstrative youth, and never told me this! How

did it all come about, tell me quick?"

She asked both questions in the same instant, and only from want of breath was it that she paused to listen.

"Mrs. Stonex Stanning liked the picture," Marcus commenced. "It was your face, I think, that pleased her. She has great influence in art circles; she asked me if I would exhibit, and said she would probably get me an invitation to contribute to the Grosvenor Gallery."

"Read certainly for probably," said Newton Marrix, drily.

"Oh! to think of it," Capri went on, demonstratively. "Mrs. Stonex Stanning must be an admirable good woman; I feel she must, though I know nothing about her. She must be your patron saint, Marc."

"Perhaps she is."

"To think of your picture hanging in

the Grosvenor Gallery, and your name in the catalogue ; and imagine all the world of London staring at my face, and all the people whispering my name ; why, it is just as good as being a fashionable beauty and having my photograph selling in the shop-windows between a bishop and a ballet-girl."

"Just as good," remarked Newton Marx, a smile breaking over his face.

"And to think that it has come so soon, for I knew it would come sooner or later."

"What?"

"Publicity."

"For you or me?"

"For both."

"Will your father have no objection to my sending the picture?" said the artist, doubtfully.

"Objection ! I should think not, especially when it will cost poor Pa nothing.

But I would not listen to him even if he did," said the girl with determination, and with a firm, decided tone that the artist had never heard in her voice before.

After a slight pause, she commenced once more.

"This will be the first step in my life," she said, with anxious eyes, and an absent smile on her lips.

"What will be?"

"Having my portrait hung before a London crowd. I may call it a portrait?"

"But how will the public know whose face it is?"

"Everyone will know it in a short time. Trust the gossips and the society papers for finding that out."

"We shall see, Capri."

"I know it will be the first step, Marc," she said more gently. "The curtain may

go up and the play begin sooner than I thought, after all, my friend."

She sat down again, this time on the threadbare hearth-rug, hugged her knees with her arms and looked gravely into the fire. All traces of her late excitement had died away from her handsome face. Her dark, almond-shaped eyes looked almost black, and beamed with light and happiness.

"It makes me feel almost wild with delight to think of this prospect," she went on as if speaking to herself. "Already I see the eager crowd before me. And you have made me look so lovely on the canvas, dear old boy—I see their critical, speculative gaze ; I hear the whispering of my name passing from mouth to mouth ; I see myself engraved in the weekly papers, photographed, spoken of in the reviews, sought

for—oh! it is all too much happiness.” Then she stopped, adding quickly, after a moment’s pause, “And it will be so good for you, too, Marc. It will bring you so much before the public. Ah! my friends, the gods are good after all, and mortals not half so bad as we sometimes think.”

She gave a low rippling laugh that left a musical echo in the ear long after she had ceased.

There was so much childlike exultation in her vanity that in the artist’s eyes it screened the latent selfishness lying beneath. Marcus Phillips and the author listened to her, pleased with her vivacity, watching the fitful changes of her bright face as the firelight fell upon it, and noting the happy light shining in her dark eyes.

The artist had never seen her so bright and fascinating as to-night, and with a keen sense of pleasure he watched her

olive face crowned with its hair of dusky gold, and every moment saw fresh beauty in her features and the graceful outline of her delicately moulded limbs. .

Once she laid her hand on his shoulder, her fingers touched his neck softly, and the artist felt the blood coming through his veins in a hot, quick surge, and he could scarce restrain himself from clasping her in his arms.

"From all you have said, I am sure you could write a novel," said Newton Marrix to her in his business-like manner. "Why don't you try?—you have plenty of imagination."

"Perhaps I may some day. It would do me no benefit now. I should get very little for it, even if I were lucky enough to get it accepted, and it would never make my name; women have a quicker way of making it than by writing books, and I

cannot afford to have frowns in my forehead from thinking out three-volumed novels, and reading the criticisms, Mr. Author," she replied, quickly.

They all laughed at the girl's answer, and then Marcus Phillips stood up to go.

"What!" said Capri, "are you thinking of leaving me on such a night as this without staying to supper? I will not hear of it. We shall make a sacrifice of tripe to the gods, and you two youths shall drink libations of beer. Sit down again, sirs."

In a second she had vanished and ran downstairs to speak to her landlady about some supper, and to send one of her pupils round the corner for a pint or two of that grateful, filling, and comforting beverage known as Burton. She tripped downstairs quite briskly, and then, calming herself and smoothing down her hair and dress, she knocked demurely at Mrs. Fum's sitting-

room door, and entered the apartment where that good lady was darning some household linen, while her daughters learned their lessons for the coming day.

In a moment or two Capri's manner had changed completely; she was no longer the impulsive vivacious child; when she crossed the threshold of her landlady's sitting-room she became a demure, respectable, and eminently proper young lady.

"Ah dear, how are you getting on with your French?" she said to one of Mrs. Fum's daughters in a tender, affectionate tone, bending over the girl and looking into the book, which bewildered her with the confusion of its most irregular verbs. "Don't forget to come and ask me to explain anything you cannot understand," Capri said; then stooping down she kissed the girl's round ruddy cheek and passed on to where her admiring mother sat,

looking at Capri's winning, affectionate ways approvingly from under her spectacles. "Mrs. Fum," commenced Capri, without further hesitation, "two of Pa's friends have come to see him; one of them has some good news to tell him about a picture, and as I knew Pa would like to see them I have asked them to have some supper."

Capri spoke as if she were but half satisfied with herself for asking them to stay, and in the same tone continued,

"So if you would kindly cook the tripe I have got in, and send out for a pint or two of Burton for them it will very much oblige me," she concluded, laying an emphasis on the pronoun, and giving motherly Mrs. Fum an appealing little smile which that good woman had not the heart to resist.

"Well, if it weren't that you asked me I shouldn't do it, Miss Capri, at this time

of night, that I shouldn't," she said, "for there, the captain has had my bill sent up to him twice this week, and he has never took no more notice of it than if it was never asked from him," said good Mrs. Fum, indignantly.

"He said to me this morning," replied Capri, drawing on her imagination, and assuming a regretful air, "that he felt quite sorry and put out about it, he did indeed; but that you should surely have the amount next week."

"Ah! well, if he had only come and said as much to me I would have been satisfied," said the landlady, whose wrath, like that of most good-humoured people, was easily pacified.

"You know he never likes saying anything to you about the bills until he is able to pay them," said Capri gently, in her softest tone, and Mrs. Fum, who knew

no such thing, but was in too amiable a mood to contradict her just then, rose up to prepare the tripe at once.

"I'll send it up to you, my dear," she said, almost sorry now that she had made any reference to the captain's habits of disregarding her bills.

At which speech Capri very sweetly smiled her thanks, and, without saying any more on the subject, she bent down and kissed the other red-cheeked daughter and glided softly out of the room, confident that this last stroke of policy would have its due weight in Mrs. Fum's maternal and ample bosom.

When Capri got outside the door she laughed softly to herself.

"Good, silly old woman that you are, with your two wooden-figured, apple-cheeked daughters, you make me tired of this miserable, petty life I have to lead,"

she said, and then she ran upstairs quickly to her guests.

“Dear young soul, she do love children,” soliloquised Mrs. Fum, as Capri left the room, “and she has such nice ways with them, and anyone as do is sure to have a good heart, and I’m sure she has one, poor young lady. Ah, me ! it’s only a pity she hasn’t a better father,” she concluded.

Capri had often thought so too ; but then unfortunately parents are not left to the selection of children, any more than children are sent into the world according to the desires of parents. We are all at odds with each other.

“Now,” said Capri merrily, as she regained the sitting-room upstairs, where Newton Marrix and the artist were having a quiet chat in her absence, “while supper is getting ready I shall play you some music if you like.”

"If you please," said Marcus Phillips, placing the music-stool for her at the piano.

"What shall I play?" she asked, totally abandoning her demure air, and returning to her natural vivacious manner.

Without waiting for an answer she sat down to the piano and struck a chord that made the wires vibrate and echo along the sounding-board.

"Improvise," said Newton Marrix, for improvisation was one of Capri's gifts.

"Yes, improvise," repeated the artist, "and we shall sit quieter than mice behind a wainscoting and listen."

"After such an offer you cannot resist I'm sure," said the author, poking the fire, that had fallen lower and lower, until he succeeded in making a blaze spring up that threw its warm light on Capri seated at the yellow-keyed instrument.

"So be it," she said. "I must hope for inspiration."

"Nay, it must come when we are here," cried out the author.

"True; I had forgotten that."

Then she struck the keys with firm, resolute fingers bringing out a melody full and clear that had a triumphant ring in its measure, which suddenly changed into a slower, softer harmony, deep and sweet, that gave but a bare suggestion of an air through which weird minor notes sounded now and then in strange contrast to the full melodious chords, like a sudden sob in the throat of a singer.

Under the influence of the music Marcus Phillips closed his eyes, laid back his head on the chair, and thought strange things. Then most abruptly once more Capri changed the time and went back to the stirring march-like measure she had start-

ed with, and then under some sudden impulse she quickly glided from one key into another, from sharps to flats, from flats to naturals, from naturals to minor chords, sounding strange, inharmonious groups of notes that by-and-by unwound themselves in scales as if seeking escape from the thrall of discord. Then suddenly she ceased.

It was very characteristic playing, and the girl's hearers felt and knew it was. Indeed there are few things to those who care for or understand music which so quickly reveals the mind and character of a player as his or her playing.

"I am afraid," said Capri, standing up quickly as she finished, "that I can give you no more music to-night, for I feel if I were to go on much longer I should laugh or cry, or do both at once, and it is better to eat one's supper than do that."

Though she made an effort to laugh after her last words, yet the tone of her voice was almost pathetic.

"Do you know, dear Marc," she said, presently, "such a night as this may never come again ; all your later triumphs, and I hope and trust you may have many, will have the freshness rubbed off them ; to-night you enjoy an experience you may never know again ; you have unexpected success in the present, and all the future before you."

"I believe I shall always remember this night," said the artist, and turning his head to where she stood in the dim light he could just see that her sweet dark eyes were filled with an expression that touched him deeply and made him happier than he could say. She lowered her lids until the long lashes touched her cheek ; not venturing to return his gaze.

Presently she raised the lamplight, and, taking out a tablecloth from one of the mysterious drawers, commenced to prepare for supper.

"I don't think we shall wait for Pa," she said, knowing that her father's habits were far from regular, "and indeed I think we shall be more comfortable without him," she ventured to add, looking at Newton Marrix as if to challenge his opinion on the subject.

The author quite agreed with Capri mentally. He had no love for the captain, but he held his peace, wonderful to be told.

In a few minutes supper, in the shape of a dish of tripe, exhaling a very savoury odour, came, and they were all about to sit down when a foot was heard upon the stairs.

"It is Pa," said Capri, looking at her friends, and her face fell in an instant.

However, she was equal to the occasion.

"Oh! Pa, we have been waiting for you," said Capri, as the military man entered the room. Looking up at him quickly as he came within the radius of the lamp she noted that his nose seemed a trifle too red, and his manner had that bearing of solemn and weighty dignity about it which the captain always assumed when he drank more than was good for him.

The more he imbibed the more his sense of respectability increased; with every fresh glass he drank came back keener recollections of past dignities; with every bottle demolished his importance swelled.

"Have you waited for me, my love?" he said, going over and kissing her forehead affectionately; for in the presence of others he invariably played the part of a fond parent.

When he approached Capri, the odour

of his breath gave evidence that he had met some kindred spirit on his homeward way.

“Ah! gentlemen, how do you do?” he said to Marcus Phillips and the rising author, as if he suddenly became aware of their presence in the room for the first time just then.

He bowed with stilted ceremony, and then shook hands with both. His entrance seemed to have rather a damping influence on the spirits of all three, and to have brought with it a chilling effect that at first made itself disagreeably felt.

The captain's manner, in its usual bearing towards Marcus Phillips and his friend, was one of mild and tolerant patronage, except on sundry occasions when he found it necessary to borrow small sums of them, which he had no sooner received than all

count of them immediately left his memory for ever.

On these various occasions when the gallant captain was, as he termed it, "hard up," and found it expedient and profitable to pay private visits to Newton Marrix's rooms, or Marcus Phillips's studio, his character and manners underwent a sudden change; he became, verbally, the victim of a hard-hearted, unfeeling, and ungenerous world; he assumed a meek patient bearing under the weight of pecuniary trials and troubles; he suddenly became a solicitous parent, weighed down with anxiety for the future welfare and happiness of his dear child, the sole hope of his life; and finally acted as a judicious adviser to his young friends, whom want of experience of the world had left ignorant of its ways; and would then dwell

with considerable feeling on the changes which time brings about; of the past splendours he had known, of the importance in which he had been held, and which somehow, though through no fault of his, but merely a caprice of fortune, had deserted him in his latter days, and placed him in a position in which a temporary—merely a temporary loan would be of service to him, and relieve him from those difficulties which might fall upon the best of men at any time.

“I have made them stay to supper,” said Capri when her father had shaken hands with the young men, and told them with the air of a grand seignior, that he was pleased to see them.

“I have made them stay to supper,” repeated Capri, hoping her father for once would say something pleasant.

“I am delighted that you have, my

dear," he replied in a tone of severe politeness.

"You are very kind," said Marcus Phillips bowing, and the captain was pleased at the deference the movement of the artist's head showed him.

After this favourable beginning Capri made a desperate effort to revive her good spirits again, and when her father was seated and had helped them all to some savoury tripe, and she had poured out her guests some beer, she commenced :

"Marcus has some good news to tell you."

She thought it better to give the artist his name in full instead of lapsing into the familiar abbreviation before her father.

"I shall be glad to hear any good news Mr. Phillips has to tell me," he said, loftily, taking care not to use the artist's Christian name.

Capri mentally resented having him called

Mr. Phillips ; she therefore said abruptly,

“ I am going to be hung.”

“ My love !” said the captain, throwing back his shoulders and staring at her with astonishment. She did not heed him.

“ Yes, it is all settled,” she went on calmly, “ I am going to be hung.”

“ And all through Mr. Phillips’s exertions,” put in Newton Marrix sily.

The captain, pretending not to hear him, looked over at Capri and addressed her.

“ My love, explain yourself ; you trifle with my feelings.”

“ Oh, do I ?” she answered flippantly, half amused and half tired of his assumption of affection and surprise.

“ My dear ?”

“ Well, I am really going to be hung—on the walls of the Grosvenor Gallery.”

“ With Captain Dankers’ permission,” said the artist conciliatingly. Then he

added, "I shall be invited to exhibit at the Grosvenor this season, and I thought of sending the 'Beggar Maid' picture."

"Which is my portrait," added Capri.

The captain laid down his knife and fork slowly, and after an impressive pause of a second or two put out his hand, which shook somewhat, to Marcus, and commenced.

"My dear sir, in the first place I congratulate you heartily, most heartily as a friend—I may say an old friend."

For once in a way there was some truth and little affectation in his words. If the struggling artist had lent him a guinea when they were few and far between in his coffers, surely the amount in times of need would increase to a threefold proportion when success would render loans matters of greater ease to the young man.

"And are you not pleased at the pros-

pect of having my picture before the world? You have seen the 'Beggar Maid,' have you not?" said Capri from the opposite side of the table.

"Yes, yes, my love," replied the captain, remembering the cause of his visits to Marcus Phillips' studio, and not wishing to have the recollections of them brought up at the present moment. "I have seen it in its early stages, and considered it even then an admirable, even a wonderful picture, I may say."

"Indeed you may," said Capri shortly, for she thought by the captain's manner there was something disagreeable about to follow, and she wished to show him she was on her guard.

Capri was right in her apprehensions, for presently the captain commenced gravely.

"I cannot as a parent set my face too

strongly against the modern craze for the exhibition of female beauty. It is one of the unwholesome signs of the times," he said slowly, with a magnificent air.

None of his hearers thought well of answering him, and after a slight pause he continued :

"This craze, gentlemen, invades and destroys the sacred sanctity of home life."

He made an impressive gesture with his right hand as he concluded, and looked at the two young men to see what effect he had produced.

Capri could scarcely restrain herself from making some sharp reply to this speech of her fond parent's, knowing as she did that he merely spoke for the sake of giving some opposition, and to exert a more effective patronage over the artist when by-and-by he was prevailed on to give consent to the exhibition of the picture.

“Cut me some bread, Marc, and give Pa some too; he has none,” she said, as if by this common-place remark after the late outburst of eloquence she sought to relieve her mind.

“The ‘Beggars Maid’ can scarcely have the dreadful effect you refer to,” said Newton Marrix a little sarcastically, “as it is not solely a portrait, and few of those who see it will know the original.”

“They will suppose it some model who sat for two shillings an hour and a cup of coffee,” Capri said quickly.

“My dear,” said the captain reprovingly, “you speak too fast.”

His dignity was slightly offended at the idea of anyone mistaking his daughter for a professional model.

“Have some more tripe, Pa?”

“I referred to a fashion in these days,” said the captain, taking no notice of

Capri's kind invitation, "which bids fair to make every woman who can lay any claim to beauty an exhibition, and render her face familiar to a vulgar crowd, and her name a—a—a byword in men's mouths," said the captain with the loftiness of severe virtue.

"These sentiments would bring down the gallery of a transpontine theatre," said the girl, who had now lost all patience.

For a time, the captain made no reply, but stared at her with gathering wrath in his watery eyes, which, by a sudden transition, turned to pathos when he remembered the presence of his guests. For a moment none of them spoke, then the captain said,

"Do you insult your old father, Capri?" and sought for his ex-white handkerchief, which was hidden in the recesses of his coat-tail pockets.

"No, Pa, no," she said, sorry that she

had spoken so hastily. "Don't let us have a scene. I was out of patience; that was all. Don't mind your handkerchief for this time, Pa dear."

Getting up she glided softly round the table until she got behind his chair, then she put one arm round his neck tenderly and set her lips lightly on his forehead. But he did mind his handkerchief notwithstanding what Capri said, for it was indispensable to the character of an injured parent, which he was playing just then. After much fumbling he found it, and applied it to his eyes judiciously.

"I can well understand your sentiments about the exhibition of portraits," said Marcus, anxious to sooth him.

"Yes, yes," he replied, his voice somewhat muffled by the effects of the handkerchief yet applied to his face, "but that my daughter should make such remarks,

should be so lost to the sense of duty due to a parent, touches my feelings quickly, sir."

"A slip of the tongue, Pa dear; you know women will say foolish things sometimes—you know I am too voluble," she said with an air of cheerful self-reproach. "Don't say any more about it."

"No error of the heart, I am sure, my love," he replied, now quite conciliated by these handsome apologies of Capri's, which he was quite unused to receive.

"Of course not," said the girl.

"And I am sure, in this particular case," he went on, not only quite pacified, but anxious to harmonize with the feelings of Capri and her friends, "no matter what objections I may privately entertain to the exhibition of faces whose charms should be kept sacred to the home circle, on this occasion I say I waive all such private

feelings, no matter how strong they may be, in the interests of my young friend—I may say my gifted and talented young friend.” And so saying he put forward his hand and grasped the artist’s across the table.

Matters were beginning to take a more cheerful and comfortable turn. The artist thanked the captain for this little speech, and in return the military man helped him to some tripe, and took some himself ; and Newton Marrix, who had finished, began to tell them the plot of a new play which would be put on the boards of the Ophelia Theatre for the first time on Saturday night, and to which performance he was going with a friend of his who knew Mr. Damington, the manager, and who could do a good thing for him in the press. Then the captain, who became more and more genial, sent for another pint of Bur-

ton, and told some old anecdotes of Charles Kean that they all had heard fifty times before, but which they now laughed at heartily, from sympathy with and to please the narrator. He told them what Phelps had said to him at supper one night.

"Captain," he said, "relinquish the sword, take to the buskin, and you will make your fortune."

He was a young man then—a gay young spark about town, he might say—and he liked a red coat too much to throw it off, "because, sir, the colour had such an attraction for the ladies."

Newton Marrix insinuated slyly it was not the colour of the coat, but the man, in which the great attraction lay; at which the captain was yet more pleased, though he made an attempt to deny the soft impeachment.

He then went on to tell them of the

charming Helen Faucit, and recited for them, with many wild gesticulations and wreathed smiles, an ode which he himself had composed about the bewitching actress, and had had printed on white satin, sir, with his initials signed, and which he carefully hid in a bouquet which he flung from a box to her feet when she played Lady Teazle, and how, by gad, the poem afterwards found its way into *The Keepsake*, though upon his honour he never knew how; and after a while it came to be whispered at White's Club, sir, that he was the writer of the verses, and didn't he get quizzed about them right soundly, he could tell you, until his name at last reached the lady's ears; and one night, sir, she smiled her thanks to him as he was in his usual box at the theatre, to the chagrin of his brother officers who were with him at the time.

"I have gone through it all, my dear boys," he said, by way of conclusion, as he helped himself to some beer, "and a gay young dog I was too, I can tell you, in my time; but I am only an old fellow now, and good for nothing," he ended, with a pathetic sigh.

The two young men assured him he underrated himself, and was good for much yet and comparatively young, after which courteous speeches on their part he brightened up once more, and, with a half empty glass in one hand, stood up to propose Marcus Phillips's health.

"It is my privilege on this occasion," he commenced, with as much ceremony as if he were at a Lord Mayor's dinner, putting his left hand on his slender waist, and so making a curve of his arm like the handle of a teapot, "and on the eve of what, I trust, may prove a great success to my

young and gifted friend, to propose his health and wish him that celebrity, that fame of which, by his industrious efforts and superior talents, he has proved himself so eminently deserving. I trust that, having up to this time been so favoured by the Muses, Fortune herself may attend him, that Venus may throw her flowery fetters about his heart, and—and—and I wish you every success in life, my dear boy," he suddenly finished, lapsing into a more common-place but honester strain.

Marcus said a few words of thanks, and told him he felt far more than he could express, and he would always remember his kind wishes.

So the night grew old, and it was almost twelve o'clock when Marcus and his friend got up and said good night.

"I think," said Capri, who had been a long time silent, not because she paid

attention to what was passing, but because she thought much—"I think that is the prologue of the play Pa has spoken of."

"Why do you think so, Capri?" asked the artist softly. They were standing apart from Newton Marrix and the captain, who were lighting cigars which the former supplied in a most amicable way.

"I do not know; only I feel that the curtain may go up at any moment and the performance commence for you and—me."

"I hope, then, it may be a pleasant comedy," said the artist, looking into her pale face.

"So do I with all my heart," she answered earnestly.

She gave him her hand, and he let it rest in his palm for a few seconds.

Newton Marrix came over just then; they were ready to depart. The captain bid them good night again and again de-

monstratively. Capri said little more, and was thoughtful.

As the two friends went down the narrow stairs she held the lamp with a light, graceful grasp above her head as she stood upon the lobby watching them descend.

The faint rays fell upon her bowed head and turned her hair to burnished gold, and flickered on her pale olive face.

Looking up for the last time from the dark stairway to where the girl stood like a saint in a shrine, the deep shadows behind her, the pale yellow glare of the lamp lighting the angles of her delicate figure, Marcus Phillips thought he read a new meaning in the depths of her dark liquid eyes.

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE GROSVENOR GALLERY.

THE first days of May arrived, bringing with them breezes so deliciously fresh and invigorating that they seemed to have travelled all the way from the Yorkshire moors, the Devon lanes, or the Norfolk coast. They swept over the close London streets, greeting the poor, pale-faced toilers, and bringing them back in the midst of their work remembrance of the peaceful country lying fair and placid in the early spring sunshine.

Great heat had come suddenly in those

days of early May ; it was close and heavy in the city ; the streets looked white and bleached in the sun ; the few trees in the squares put on their greenness once more, and after long months of cloud and fog the sky looked wondrously clear and blue.

At the street corners baskets of lilies of the valley that had come up from the cool shelter of their native woods, and purple violets, that grew wan and faded exposed to the heat and glare, and yellow primroses fresh from the leafy hedgerows, and rich-hued wall-flowers that looked sadly defected and crushed, and leaned against each other for support in this their hour of trial and death, were all being sold for a penny the bunch.

There were other signs, too, that spring and the London season had commenced. Bond Street was lined with a double row

of carriages in the afternoons ; the opera season was announced, and rumour had it that a new tenor was engaged for Covent Garden Theatre who had never before sung out of Italy ; the Row was filled in the mornings with riders, and all the celebrities and beauties and people worth seeing in London were on view in the afternoon ; three new plays had been produced at three different theatres ; and the picture-galleries in all their attractions were opened, and filled with well-dressed bustling crowds all day long. This year the Grosvenor Gallery was the special attraction.

The painters of the pre-Raphaelite school were strong in number in Sir Coutts Lindsay's gallery ; their selections of subjects and general treatment were remarkable, and caused wide attention ; many of their canvases were considered by some as

masterpieces, by others as so much waste of labour and good paint.

One picture which a young artist had given to the world and the Grosvenor Gallery was a vision of Jephthah's daughter, standing against a background of flame-coloured sky, her blue-black hair bound round her shapely head and filleted with dead gold, her round dusky breasts, half covered with a robe of pale green, was caught at the lithe waist by a white girdle that, falling over the outer garment almost to her naked feet, marked the contrast of one brown limb, nude and divinely shaped.

This picture was the great success of the season, and next in popular favour came the "Beggar Maid."

The public who plumed itself on knowing all particulars about painters and pictures, wondered they had never heard

of Marcus Phillips before, and for this reason it was almost inclined to leave his canvas unnoticed.

The world will seldom allow itself to be taken by surprise; it is a liberty which it rarely lets pass without resentment; yet an artist who could paint a face like the "Beggar Maid's" was not to be neglected, and so, after a slight debate with itself, it consented to take this picture and the young painter into its favour.

Whose was the face he had painted, people asked each other; not a professional model surely, or it would have been seen in many disguises before from Iphigenia to some common-place Mariana in a moated grange.

It was a lovely face, the people agreed, one that haunted you with a subtle, half hidden look in its eyes long after it was passed by, that made people return again and again to gaze on it afresh.

Marcus Phillips fixed an afternoon in the first week of the exhibition on which to take Capri to the gallery.

"I am dying with impatience," said the girl, "and yet I half fear to go. I am sure the sight of the picture hanging there in all its glory will make me cry, Marc."

"Nonsense, Capri."

"It's not nonsense, sir. It sets me into a fever when I borrow a paper from the news shop round the corner and read what the critics have to say about me."

"They have said nothing unpleasant?"

"Not that I know of, Marc. Do you know I should like to stand by the picture all day, wrapped in an invisible cloak, and hear the people's remarks as they passed by me," she said. Her eyes brightened, and a glow came into her pale olive cheeks that deepened the rich tint of her skin.

"You would soon tire of that, I fancy," said the artist.

"We never tire of hearing others talk of us, if they say pleasant things."

"Well, you shall sit before the 'Beggar Maid' as long as you like when we go," replied Marcus Phillips, looking down at her fondly, and half dazzled by the sight of the girl's beauty.

"Well, I shall prepare my wardrobe for the occasion," she said, wondering if she could make her father give her a guinea for a new dress; for it was long since she had had one.

"Is there any way I could help you?" asked the young man timidly, looking away from her as he spoke.

"No, my dear Marc, there is not," she answered gratefully, quickly divining his meaning. "I shall make the best of my resources, trust me," she said, with a

saucy laugh, and no more was said on the subject.

At last Wednesday came, the day on which Capri was to see the picture hanging in the gallery, and early in the afternoon Marcus Phillips called for her.

"Come up," she shouted from the top of the stairs as he entered the hall.

She had been anxiously expecting him, and was waiting.

When he went into the sitting-room, however, there was no one to be seen. He remained quite quiet for a moment, and then Capri sprang from behind the door, where she had been hiding, with a joyous little trip, stopped short as he held out his hand, made him a grave bow, and said, "How do you like me now?" with emphasis on the last word, to mark the difference in her appearance between the past and present time.

"Oh!" said Marcus, holding up his hands in astonishment, and then was silent.

"That is all you men ever say. How do you like my new hat? Isn't it æsthetic? I trimmed it myself. I hope you admire me," she said, all in one breath.

She was much changed surely, and though in one sense she looked handsomer, yet the alteration seemed to take away some of her old charms.

Her dark hair, with its undershade of gold, was brushed low upon her forehead, underneath the wide leaf of a Rembrandt hat that cast a softening shade upon her lovely olive face. Her shoulders were covered by some soft grey material that clung to the shape of her maturing figure, and her dress of the same colour touched the tips of her shoes.

"I told you, Marc, I should grow quite

respectable some day," she said, looking down at her dress admiringly.

"And you have kept your word," he answered her with a merry laugh. "I should scarcely have known you."

"Look at my gloves. Six buttons! not one less. Old Pallamari gave them to me when he heard I was going to the gallery."

"And the silver bracelet?" said the artist, noticing on her wrist a handsome silver bangle.

"Oh! the bangle," she said carelessly.

"Yes."

"Lord Harrick gave me that the other day."

"Lord Harrick?" he said, in surprise.

"Yes; I bound up a cut he got here while fencing with Pa, and next day he sent this. Pa said I might accept it. Don't look so cross. Is there anything dreadful in that?"

A shadow passed across the artist's face for a moment, but the girl either did not, or pretended not to see it, and turned away her head to stare into a little square of mirror that hung against the wall.

Marcus Phillips made no answer. The incident displeased him, but he felt he had no right whatsoever to object, and he was anxious that this afternoon should not be clouded by any words of his that could cause her annoyance.

"They will never recognize the 'Beggar Maid' in a Rembrandt hat," said Capri lightly as they drove to Bond Street. "I wonder if the place will be full?"

"It is sure to be," answered the artist, from whom all signs of displeasure had now departed.

"I hope I may hear what they say of me, Marc."

"That is hardly fair to them. Though

walls are said to have ears, I never heard that pictures had."

When they came to the hall, and Capri saw the flight of white steps, and the two servants in blue livery behind the check-gates, and the crowds of people coming up and going down, she felt somewhat awed. She had never been before to the Grosvenor Gallery, and it was all delightfully new and fresh to her to-day. She felt as if she were a part of all this imposing display, as if it were all more or less connected with her, or she with it; for did not the crowd come to stare at her portrait, and talk about it, and criticise it? was not her face one of the great attractions of the Grosvenor? She thought that all those who passed stared at her as she and the artist pushed their way to the centre room, where the picture hung.

Capri sank down before it on a low

velvet couch, and could not speak for some time. There was the picture of the "Beggar Maid" in all the glory of its gorgeous frame, hanging among many other pictures which she could not look at just then, and which had not the slightest interest for her.

Here was the realization of one of her ambitions face to face with her now; here was one of her dreams turned to fact in the broad light of sober day. Had anyone told her a month ago that her portrait would be exhibited in a Bond Street gallery, she would have laughed incredulously at the words, yet here was the picture hanging in a prominent position, with all the London art-world talking of it; and here she sat quietly, as if all that had come to pass was a matter of course, and not at all a fact to be wondered at.

The greatest events of our lives, which

oftentimes we scarcely dared to anticipate, when they happen assume the most common-place aspects ; the anticipation, we find, far exceeds the realization. So Capri thought. She was almost surprised at herself resting so calmly before the picture hanging there in all its wonderful charm and beauty.

“Oh, Marc,” she said at length under her breath, “it looks beautiful. I think it looks far better here than in the studio.”

“Probably its surroundings add to the effect,” said the artist.

“I cannot help saying it looks very lovely ; and then what a splendid room, and those servants in livery, and the flight of white steps. Do you know it all seems a part of my belongings to-day.”

They both laughed at this opinion.

“But your picture looks better than all

the others," she continued; "you have made me look so beautiful."

"It is Nature who has done that, not I," he answered honestly.

She felt the colour coming into her face, and a wonderful happy sensation filling her young heart.

After this they did not speak for some time, but sat staring at the "Beggar Maid." It was so familiar to them in every shade and line that it seemed like an old friend; for all that they examined every inch of it over and over again, and looked at its various effects seen from different points of view.

Then, after a while, Capri let her eyes wander to the other pictures by way of contrast; not that any of them had much interest for her, or in her eyes could compare with Marcus Phillips' works, but

she glanced at them patronizingly, believing that her inspection of them would but heighten her appreciation, if that were possible, for the "Beggar Maid."

After a time she looked from the pictures to the visitors at the gallery. It was always interesting to the girl to watch people: it was a study and a lesson, she told herself. One often learns much by the observation of trifles.

The gallery was well filled, the sofas and chairs were all occupied, and groups of people kept coming in and out continually. One old lady went round the room, spectacles on nose, and catalogue in hand, paying far more attention to the latter than to the pictures, satisfied with a mere glance at each, but determined to see all, after the manner of Cook's excursionists visiting the lions of a Continental town.

Another lady, who was determined to see nothing in the gallery, sat in a corner of one of the crimson velvet lounges, reading "A Man's Mistake," which she had just got from the library below-stairs ; she was so much engaged by the novel that she did not deign to raise her eyes to the pictures around her.

A stout country clergyman walked slowly round, wondering in his mild way at the eccentricity of the talent which had produced many strange pictures, and pausing now and then to examine more closely some studies from the nude, which the collection plentifully supplied. Some young ladies came in dressed in brick-coloured gowns of coarse flannel, which hung about them in a fashion supposed to represent high art—very high art indeed—and whose great hats, the wonderful combinations of many styles and periods, served to make

their wearers as odd, and certainly as ugly, as possible. They were rather sad of aspect and angular of figure, and they paused and posed continually in attitudes which, though carefully studied from the antique, lacked its old grace utterly.

The girls in question came along slowly, catalogues in hand, making various comments on each picture.

"Look at these oddly-dressed girls with satchels hanging by their sides; let us hear what they say," said Capri.

The girls in brick-coloured flannel were just before them then.

"Seventy-seven," one of them said.

"'What a Soul did Dream,'" answered the other, referring to her programme. "It is taken from a poem. The treatment is supremely lovely."

"It is too divine."

They both sighed.

"Seventy-eight," said the first speaker.

"The Sleeping Hermes," she bearing the catalogue said, letting her left arm droop by her side, whilst she laid her right hand, with her fingers well apart, against her cheek.

"Seventy-nine."

"The 'Beggar Maid.'"

They went over with a slow, sage air to the picture, as if to examine it critically, and then drew back to get the different effect which distance might afford.

"Does it please you?" asked number one, clasping her hands together and resting them against her left shoulder.

Capri held her breath to catch the reply; she thought the answer would never come.

"Yes," replied number two; "but it is a face sublimitized, idealized."

"One can readily see that at a glance."

“The eyes are very wonderful ;

‘Love-lights within their shadows dwell,
What your heart holds may no man tell,’”

she said, gravely addressing the “Beggar Maid.”

“The face is too lovely for real life,”
the plainest of the girls remarked.

“Eighty. What is that?” the other
asked, and they passed on their way.

Capri’s face flushed with pleasure ; her
vanity was satisfied for the moment, for
had not her own sex, who are ever the
most critical in their examination of
female beauty, declared her too beautiful
for real life? The words were like sweet-
est music to her ears.

A family group, consisting of a stout
mother, provincial paterfamilias, two fat
boys in short jackets, evidently tortured
by gloves and the stiffest of white collars,
and three girls in the shortest permissible

dresses came next and stood between Capri and the picture, with all that charming politeness which may be witnessed every day in an English picture-gallery.

She did not care much to hear their criticism ; she noticed that the stout matron gave a blank stare at the "Beggar Maid," as if the picture personally offended her virtue because the paterfamilias had looked at it a minute longer than at the other canvases, and had pointed to it with his catalogue as he murmured,

"Pretty face that, my dear."

"Was she a beggar, mother?" one of the stout-limbed boys in the short jackets asked.

"Yes, dear," she replied, for all her information on the subject came from the catalogue.

"I never saw a beggar like her before,"

said the boy, who evidently belonged to the realistic school.

“No, of course not, because the police takes them up, you know,” said the other, and this explanation settled the question satisfactorily for the youthful and inquiring mind.

They passed on, and their places were soon taken by two of our *jeunesse dorée* with hay-coloured hair and foolish faces, who knew as much about pictures particularly and art generally as the heathen Chinese.

On they came arm in arm, with sticks in their hands, whose handles continually found their way to their mouths.

“Fine girl that, Algy.”

“Yes, if she were properly dressed.”

“What is the picture called? let us see.”

They opened the catalogue and found the number.

"Seventy nine : the 'Beggar Maid,'" read out he that was named Algy.

"What beggar maid?" asked his friend.

"Oh, some one that Cophetua was sweet on ; I forget the story."

"Cophetua—was he a foreigner?"

"Yes ; of course he was. It's only those foreigners who are spoony enough to fall in love with beggar maids, and that sort of thing."

"Pretty girl, though she is rather dark ; she was a foreigner too, I suppose."

"Of course. Look at the next picture."

"Eighty : the 'Sleeping Hermes.'"

"Poor little beggar, how cold he must be."

They grinned and passed on.

Capri caught snatches of their conversation and could scarcely restrain herself from laughing aloud.

"These are some of the patrons of the fine arts, I suppose," she said.

"Certainly, we are all artistic now-a-days ; it is the fashion."

"Their knowledge is not too profound," she said smiling, and showing her rows of white teeth, all the whiter for the contrast to her cherry-coloured lips.

"Knowledge is not at all necessary to those who patronise, as our friend Newton would say."

"Oh, Marc, there he is at the end of the gallery, and there is some one with him, a tall, stout lady ; look what a dress she has on."

"You are a true woman, Capri."

"Why, sir?"

"You notice the dress almost the first thing."

"No, it is not feminine so much as artistic perception ; I have an eye for effect," she answered with a pretty assumption of indignation that made her look very child-

like and winning as she pouted her lips, knit her straight dark brows, and looked saucily out of her bright eyes.

“Who is she?” she asked, presently.

“I’m sure I do not know.”

“Not Mrs. Stonex Stanning?”

“No, certainly not,” said the artist quickly, as if comparisons were doubly odious in this case.

Newton Marrix and his companion came along slowly, he explaining the subject of each picture and telling anecdotes of the artists, in a very voluble manner, she listening attentively.

When they were within a few yards of where Capri and the artist sat, Newton Marrix recognized them, and saying a word or two to the lady with him they both advanced.

“Ah, Miss Capri,” he said, extending his hand, “this is a surprise; and, Marc, old

fellow. you did not tell me you were coming to-day. Mrs. Lordson," he continued, turning to the lady who stood beside them, "let me introduce to you my friends Miss Capri Dankers and Mr. Marcus Phillips."

"Pleased I'm sure to meet them," said Mrs. Lordson. with a nasal accent which, though slight, betrayed her transatlantic nationality.

The artist stood up and asked her if she would not take his place on the sofa ; and she sank down at once with that luxurious sense of rest after fatigue which only a corpulent person can thoroughly enjoy.

"Thank you, I'm glad to sit awhile," she said, arranging her ample skirts of dark ruby satin, trimmed with a profusion of old point lace that would have realized a small fortune.

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson was an American widow, who had come over to

England with the avowed purpose of entering London society. To force such an entrance, to see herself surrounded by the upper ten thousand, to rub shoulders with men and women known to the world at large, or with beings whose names were inserted in De Brett's "Peerage," was the great ambition of this daughter of the Republic.

The late W. Achilles Lordson had been in his day an enterprising pork-butcher in Brooklyn, and had died two years ago, leaving his childless relict the mistress of a large annuity, which was more than sufficient to cover her most extravagant desires.

After her grief had been partially assuaged, she started for Europe in company with a large party of her own country people, of whom, however, she soon tired.

She had wintered in Florence, gone on

to Rome, come back to France, remained four months in Paris, but "not liking them foreign people, that one never knew what they were saying, in their own foolish way jabbering like monkeys," as she told Newton Marrix, she came over to London and settled herself in a pretty house situated in May Fair.

She had not been a fortnight in town when chance threw her in Newton Marrix's way. They were introduced by a common friend who was about to start for Norway, and Newton was asked, as a favour, to show the sights of the great show to Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson; a task he readily consented to undertake.

In the smart young author who fluttered in and out of society in butterfly fashion, who knew everybody worth knowing, and whom in turn everybody knew, Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson saw a man who would

probaby prove most useful and agreeable. On the other hand Newton Marrix recognized in the widow just stranded in a town quite foreign to her, a woman with social ambitions which he might help to gratify, and great wealth, whose friendship might afford him many advantages.

With such a mutual though unexpressed understanding, they had commenced an acquaintanceship which offered to flow on pleasantly for both.

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson was tall, and, like most of her countrywomen, her figure was erect and well shaped ; it was a trifle stout, perhaps, and rounded, but this gave her a more imposing appearance. Her face, which in warm weather was apt to become singularly glossy, was a great blank upon which Nature had written but two words—capital ones in their way—“good nature.”

She was a showy and what most men would call a fine-looking woman, whom one could not help noticing in a crowd. When she walked she flung back her head, thrust her ample bosom forward, and swung her right hand. If her gait was not graceful, it was certainly far from being awkward. Altogether her appearance had an air which, even if pronounced, had a freedom about it not unpleasant, and decidedly refreshing.

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson evidently had an eye for colours and jewellery, two points of taste in which she lavishly indulged, and which invariably marked her appearance; moreover she had a passion for old lace. In the first place it was expensive, in the second it was especially associated in her eyes with respectability.

"I am glad to sit down really," she said, accepting Marcus Phillips' offer.

Her skirt half covered poor Capri, who had never before sat alongside of ruby satin, and now for the first time had a nearer approach than a shop-window to old point lace.

"Mr. Phillips is the painter of number seventy-nine," said Newton to Mrs. Lordson.

"Really, now," she said, looking with something like awe at a live artist, who stood beside her with a pleasant smile on his fair face, and a frank look in his blue eyes that pleased her.

"And," continued the author, when he had given her sufficient time to recover her surprise, "Miss Dankers is the original of the 'Beggar Maid.'"

"La, you don't mean it?" she said with evident surprise in her eyes; and she stared at Newton Marrix, and then at the picture, and back again at Capri, who was beginning to enjoy the scene.

"Well, I'm sure," she exclaimed, when she had compared the girl's face with the "Beggar Maid's," and had apparently satisfied herself that Capri was truly the original. Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson thought that after these announcements she should not feel surprised if one of the fat-limbed boys in the short jackets belonging to the paterfamilias group, was presented to her as the original of the "Sleeping Hermes."

She rose with an effort from the sofa and went up to the "Beggar Maid" picture, and came back again and stared at Capri, who took it all good-humouredly.

"Is it not like me?" asked Capri.

"Like you? I should think so."

"A fact which nobody can deny," said Newton Marrix.

"It would not be complimentary to me

if they did," said Marcus Phillips. "It is as much a portrait as a picture."

"La, it is beautiful," said the American, "and so is the young lady too," and once more she sat down, highly pleased with her chaperon for having introduced her to two such remarkable persons at once as the young artist and the original of a picture of which she had heard much.

Capri's eyes fell on the thick gold chain suspended from her cameo brooch to her waist, with its wealth of massive ornaments; and then looked into the matron's good-natured face, and smiled with a child-like look of delight. The smile, sunny and winning, went straight to Mrs. Lordson's heart, and warmed it like a ray of light.

"How lovely you are," she said, bluntly, in a motherly kind of way, looking straight into Capri's face with a steady gaze of admiration.

“Mr. Phillips has idealised my picture, I suppose,” answered Capri, suddenly dropping the familiar “Marc,” and pretending not to know that the good woman’s remarks were made regarding herself, and not her picture.

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson wondered what she meant by idealise, and took a mental note of the word in order that she might ask Newton Marrix its signification when they were alone, for already she had come to regard him as her Mentor.

“We are going to the end of the room to look at ‘Jephthah’s Daughter,’” said the author, speaking for himself and Marcus Phillips.

“Yes, ’tis fine,” said Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, who had just seen it and heard the details of its merits enumerated by her friend.

The American and Capri were left alone.

"Have you seen 'Jephthah's Daughter'?" she asked.

"No ; we have not been long here."

"It's fine, I can tell you."

"I should like to see it, by-and-by," said Capri.

"You must. It's in the per-Raphaelite school, you know," said the American, who had a strong desire to air her knowledge of art.

Capri maintained a very serious face.

"Is it some one's portrait?" the girl asked ; for she thought every face in the gallery must be like hers, a portrait.

"Like enough," replied Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson. "I should never have known that picture was a likeness of you only for meeting you here ; so it may be the same with 'Jephthah's Daughter.' But I will ask Mr. Marrix. He will be sure to know, he

is such a clever young man. He knows everything."

"He is very agreeable," said Capri.

"And has a lot of intelligence," said the widow.

She took up an enormous black and gold fan that hung by her well-proportioned side, and fanned herself energetically. Capri looked at the fan that sparkled and flashed and half dazzled her sight, and wondered how much it had cost.

"You like my fan?" she said, noting the girl's admiring glance.

"It is very handsome."

"Isn't it fine? It cost me twenty dollars, that it did," and she opened and shut it with evident gratification.

"Where did you buy it; in America?"

"No, my dear, in Paris. That's the place for gloves, and boots, and fans!"

Capri wondered why it was that people

like Mrs. Lordson had plenty of money, while she, who had taste and was refined, had not a penny in the world to bless herself with. It was strange !

A group of young girls in faded blue and olive-green robes, cut in a fashion partly Greek, partly Japanese, partly early English, passed in front of them at that moment.

“La ! how queer they dress,” soliloquised Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson. “They do look frights, some of them. It makes one think they are not in their right minds until one gets used to them. They remind me of the poor young thing, Ophelia, that I saw last night at the theatre, who went out of her mind, and got on in a dreadful way that quite gave me a turn.”

“It is fashionable to dress in this way,” said Capri, smiling at the American’s remarks.

"Yes. Mr. Marrix says it's 'sthetic."

"So it is," said Capri. "It is high art."

"Do you like artists and writers and poets, and all that lot?" she asked, turning round to Capri.

"Yes," answered the girl, "they are very nice people."

"We have few of them in the States," she said confidentially, "and they seem a little odd in their ways to me."

"They are all Bohemians."

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson did not understand. She made another mental note, in order to have her Mentor's opinion by-and-by.

"I adore art myself," she said, presently.

She had privately made up her mind that she would become a patroness of art; for she had a just, sensible, and popular idea that money can do anything and everything now-a-days.

"Do you stay long in town?" Capri questioned her timidly.

"Yes, I think I'll settle down in London. I have taken a house in May Fair, a small place, but large enough for one; for I have neither chick nor child belonging to me in life."

"How lonely you must be," said Capri, sympathetically, in a low, sweet tone, and she looked into the widow's good-natured face with her most trusting child-like expression.

"Yes, I am lonely sometimes," said Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, with a sigh that made her capacious bosom heave like a billow; "but then, when one lives in the world and goes about, one has not much time left for thinking."

As she spoke she looked into Capri's face, and thought how sweet and beautiful it was.

"And you, my dear," said the American, familiarly, "I suppose you have a lot of brothers and sisters at home?"

"Oh! no," the girl replied wistfully, as if the possession of those relatives was the one thing in life she most desired.

"You are an only child?"

"Yes, I live all alone with Pa. My mother has been dead many years. I barely remember her."

Capri cast her eyes down. Mrs. Lordson thought they were full of tears.

"My!" she ejaculated, and put up her heavy gold-rimmed glasses, to take a keener look at Capri's slender figure, clad in its quiet grey colour.

Just then Capri lowered her arm, and the silver bangle, which was too large for her, fell to the ground. The girl bent down to pick it up. She had thought it handsome and valuable, but now, from

contrast with the massive bands of gold that clasped Mrs. Lordson's fleshy wrists, it looked almost shabby.

"What a pretty bangle," said Mrs. Lordson, wishing to make herself agreeable to the girl.

"It is simple," said Capri. "It was given to me by Lord Harrick."

"Lord Harrick!" said the American lady, on whom the viscount's name had the due effect which Capri intended.

"Yes, he is a friend of Pa's," she remarked, as if peers of the realm were commonplace, every-day acquaintances of hers.

"My! Do you go much into society?" she asked, after a slight meditative pause.

"No, we live very quietly. See, here are our friends back."

At that moment the artist and Newton Marrix opportunely returned, before Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson could ask any further

questions of Capri concerning her home.

"Come and see me soon, dear," said the American, turning suddenly to Capri.

"With great pleasure," answered the girl, quite pleased at the prospect.

"Some morning when I am quiet, say Monday next, if that will suit you."

"It will suit me very well."

"Come about twelve, and we will have a quiet chat."

"I shall be very glad," said Capri, eagerly, for the proposal filled her with a delight she could scarcely contain.

She had accomplished a move in the right direction, and was pleased at the impression she had made on the wealthy American's mind. She had not wasted the first opportunity to advance herself which fate had thrown in her way.

When the two young men returned Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson stood up and rustled

her ruby satin dress that caught the light in its luminous folds, and jingled her lockets and charms and bracelets noisily, and folded her gorgeous black and gold fan.

"I think we will go now," she said, turning to Newton Marrix. "I am half dazed like with all these pictures. Don't you think they give one a headache?" she, who adored art, asked of Capri.

"No," said the girl, who had but little experience of galleries, but who spoke as if she were a veteran picture-hunter.

"We shall come some other day and look at the rest," said Mrs. Lordson. Then she turned round to where Marcus Phillips stood, and said, in a most gracious manner, "Mr. Phillips, yours is the picture that pleases me best in the gallery," and she smiled at him good-naturedly, as if to encourage him. Already she had com-

menced to play at being an art-patroness.

"You give me great pleasure," said the artist, bowing to her.

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson thought he made a finer bow and looked better, though only an artist, than Senator B. Woulfetone Flannigan, who was known to possess some six or seven million dollars, or even than J. Washington Mangleter himself, who ran for the presidency last fall.

"Good-bye, my dear," she said to Capri, seizing her hand and giving it a grasp which the girl feared would burst her new glove that was a size too small. "You will come on Monday?"

"I shall with pleasure."

"I hope to see you again, Mr. Phillips," she concluded, giving the artist's hand an honest, vice-like grip.

Then she jangled all her jewellery and

rustled her ample skirts once more, and swept out of the gallery beside Newton Marrix.

"Oh, Marc," Capri said eagerly, when they were gone, "why did you not speak more to her? She has taken a house in Mayfair, and adores art, she says."

"Well?"

"Well, of course, if she takes a house and adores art, she will want to buy pictures, and she has plenty of money," said the girl sagely, looking up at the tall, fair-haired man beside her.

"What a wise little woman you are in your generation," he said.

"And what a dreamer you are in yours, dear old Marc," she replied, imitating his tone.

"Perhaps."

"You should cultivate that woman's acquaintance. If I were you, I would

invite her to my studio—she would be delighted with the idea—and then I should sell her a pot-boiler for a good round sum.”

“What a mercenary creature !”

“I always told you I was.”

“And I never believed you.”

“But you will some day.”

“I hope not, Capri.”

“Well, about Mrs. Lordson : she knows as much about art as a cat, but she will fill her house with it to make up for her ignorance. People like her always do that.”

“Well ?”

“You save her from collecting a lot of rubbish.”

“How can I do that ?”

“How dull you are ! Why, by selling her some of your own pictures ; she will make a better purchaser than your hard-hearted bargaining old dealers. You will

serve her and yourself at the same time."

A shadow passed over the artist's face; he did not answer the girl immediately, but looked away from her.

"What are you thinking of, Marc?" she asked after a pause.

"Shall I tell you?"

"Certainly: you must, now you excite my curiosity. What is it?"

"I am thinking it is a pity you are so fond of money."

"Perhaps it is," replied Capri, not displeased with him, but softened at his unexpected answer.

"Now, in turn, will you tell me of what you are thinking?" he asked, watching the half regretful look that came into her dark eyes.

"I am thinking it is a pity that the world renders it necessary for us to think of money."

“It is a pity if it does, for it takes away much of the pleasure and freshness from life.”

“Maybe,” she answered, with a sigh ;
“come, let us go round the gallery.”

CHAPTER VIII.

A MORNING CALL.

ON the day Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson had appointed, Capri punctually presented herself at the little house in Mayfair, dressed in her quiet grey costume, with a band of dark crimson velvet round her throat, the only spot of colour visible in her whole attire.

Though her dress was as simple as well could be, and its hue as neutral as the severest British matron could desire for a young girl, yet there was something, not so much about its shape and colour as about

the indescribable way in which it was worn, that at once gave it an unstudied grace, which made the plain material and its quiet colour almost picturesque.

Capri had smiled at her reflection in the little square of mirror hanging on the wall in her bed-room with a complacent, gratified air, when she had completed her toilette, and fastened the bright-coloured satin round her neck by way of artistic contrast.

She had told her father of the meeting with the wealthy American widow in the Grosvenor Gallery, and of the invitation she had given her to go and have a quiet chat with her; and that judicious parent was pleased that Capri should keep her appointment with Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, for he considered a closer acquaintance with that lady might prove of advantage to either Capri or himself, though in what way he could not exactly define.

The captain was a man who was fond of glancing into the future in search of any bright spots its horizon might probably contain. Moreover, he had a speculative mind, like many others with little to engage them. He was ever ready for any change or good luck that could possibly befall him.

If he woke up any morning in the year to receive a telegram declaring him heir to a title and estates, by sixteen sudden deaths at one fell blow, he would not have been much surprised, and would have regarded the sixteen deaths but as the timely interposition of Providence on his behalf.

He was ever waiting for fortune's favours, yet for all his readiness they never came, and so the captain learned patience.

In the present case he was interested by Capri's account of Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson. She was an American ; she was wealthy ;

she had asked his daughter to visit her. With such materials to commence with in the present, what might not the future promise?

The captain filled his pipe, for cigars were luxuries only to be enjoyed in the evening, and had a quiet smoke thinking over Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson while Capri proceeded towards Mayfair.

The clocks of the neighbouring churches were striking midday in a wonderful jangle of different tones as she gave a timid rap at the great brass knocker of the little door, which represented the head of some animal as yet completely unknown to the most learned naturalist.

In order to rap one was obliged to get hold of the two fierce-looking front teeth, and strike them against the grizzled chin of the monster ; the mouth was a receptacle for letters.

The grotesque animal had eyes that glared as fiercely as it was possible for bronze to glare. Capri thought they sought to rivet her to the doorstep by a sullen malignant glare which, if she but looked away for a moment, might develop into a half comic wink.

She had not long, however, to wait; the door was flung open by a page in spick and span new livery, the buttons of whose jacket from chin to waist far outnumbered his years.

His hair was light, and sleek as brushing could make it; his face shining and rosy, so that altogether he was so dapper and new of aspect that he looked like an automatical boy that had been just sent home to order from the stores.

"Mrs. Lordson?" said Capri, who grew more timid in the presence of this glittering specimen of humanity.

“What name?” he asked, with a sudden snap-like manner, and then looked impenetrable.

“Miss Dankers.”

“Walk up to the drawing-room, please,” he said, as if repeating a lesson, and looking at Capri from head to foot.

He showed her upstairs, flung the door open and announced her.

“Miss Dankers.”

Capri stood in the majestic presence of Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson.

That lady was seated in a low square-backed arm-chair, which she amply filled, arrayed in a flowered yellow damask morning wrapper, trimmed with many and many a bow of olive-hued satin ; a lace cap just rested on the back of her head, and a thick gold chain, from which a massive locket was suspended, was fastened round her full throat ; her stout fingers were littered with

rings, and even at that early hour she was resplendent with jewellery.

The windows of the drawing-room were raised, and admitted the fresh, sweet odour of plants and flowers that crowded the little balcony outside, around the ornamental metal work of which vine tendrils were trained. It was shaded by a pretty awning of pink and white lawn, which threw a delicate shade into the room.

It was deliciously cool after the heat of the morning outside, Capri thought ; but the blaze of colour the apartment presented, and the costly objects with which it was filled, almost dazzled her.

Never before, except on the stage of the Lyceum Theatre, had she seen such furniture. The chairs and couches were upholstered in yellow figured satin, which was fully thrown into relief against their ebony backs ; the window-curtains were of the same gor-

geous colour, somewhat toned down by the costly lace which overhung and half covered them. The carpet had a background of orange, over which purple passion-flowers and plants, such as never grew in terrestrial gardens, twined themselves into bright-hued garlands.

An upright piano, resplendent in ebony and gold, stood in one corner of the room ; a huge Corean jar in the other ; and between the windows a pedestal surmounted by a Greek double-headed vase, bearing the faces of Hercules and Omphale, which Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson had bought for its weight in gold, and which she fondly imagined made good her claim as a lover of art in all men's sight.

Old china and many quaint, delightful specimens of porcelain stood on shelves and brackets about the walls.

The effect of the room, taken for all in

all, made one inclined to feel rather seasick on this bright morning, but it was all new to Capri, and the great glare had not yet time to act upon her nerves.

"How do you do, my dear?" said Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, smiling with that good-natured expression which compensated for much that her face lacked or lost, as Capri entered the room.

The stout lady did not rise from her chair, for that would prove an exertion she was not prepared to undergo in the morning.

"Very well, thanks," said Capri, a little shy at feeling herself suddenly in the midst of such splendour.

"I am glad to see you, my dear," said the matron kindly, pressing the girl's hand.

"How delightfully cool it is in here!"

"It is. My blinds are well managed."

Capri looked out at the pink and white

awning and the bright flowers outside.

"Are you hot, my dear?"

"Just a little."

"Well, take off your hat and jacket; for I hope you are prepared to spend a couple of hours with me at least," she said pleasantly.

Capri readily declared she would be delighted, and laid down her jacket, not without some hesitation, on one of the yellow-satin-covered chairs.

"Why, child, you look twice as well without your hat! How handsome you are!" and the matron gazed at Capri as if she were a picture or a statue.

A warm hue came into the pale olive of her face, and light into her dark eyes. Mrs. Lordson's words gave her a keen pleasure, which she was quick to show, and for which she felt grateful.

These complimentary words prepared her

to like the American. A little word frequently means so much, though it is often spoken so lightly. It is a pity we do not think more before we speak, it would oftentimes render us so much more agreeable to others.

"Come and sit by me," said Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson.

The girl took a little stool, and placing it at the matron's feet sat down there, and looked, with a winning, child-like glance into the broad, coarse, good-natured face above her.

"That's right," she said when Capri had settled herself. "What is your first name? I have made up my mind that you and I are to be friends, and I shall not call you Miss Dankers, my dear."

"I am glad of that," replied the girl.
"Almost everyone calls me Capri."

"Capri?"

"Yes; I am called after the island where I was born."

"La! child, who ever heard of the like?" asked Mrs. Lordson, smiling.

"Very few, I believe."

"And where is the island, my dear? It is not a desert one, I hope, for your poor mother's sake."

"No," answered Capri, who could not restrain a smile. "It is near Naples."

"Oh! you are a foreigner then. That is the reason you are so dark," she said with charming natural bluntness.

"My mother was a foreigner, a Neapolitan, whom my father married when he was abroad."

"Is he a foreigner, too?"

"No, he is an Englishman; they lived in Capri when I was born, and for some time after. I came to England some years after my mother died, when Pa retired."

"Retired from what?" asked Mrs. Lordson, already interested in what she heard.

"From the English army," replied Capri, looking up to see the effect of her words.

"Oh! I see. Is he a colonel?"

Colonels were as plentiful in Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson's land as blackberries are in September in an English lane, and familiarity with those gallant countrymen of hers had bred a contempt in her bosom for their rank.

However, during her short acquaintance with European life, she was just beginning to see there was some contrast between the military men yclept colonels on the other side of the Atlantic and men of the same title in England.

Still she liked the sound of the word colonel. It was fine, she thought, and might have ever so many glorious and heroic associations connected with it; in-

deed she might, had she chosen, now be Mrs. Colonel H. Johnson Walworth, but the colonel kept a fruit-stall and swore dreadfully when his apples got bad, and was utterly ignorant of art.

She was rather disappointed when Capri said her father was but a retired captain, but she reflected that a captain in the English army was a good thing after all.

"And where do you live, my dear?" she asked.

"In the Euston Road," replied the girl, without hesitation. "Pa is not very well off now; we live very quietly."

"I see," said Mrs. Lordson, grasping the situation at once, and remaining thoughtful for some little time.

"Well," she said, after a slight pause, with the air of one about to give confidence for confidence, "last fall but one I came to Europe."

“Last fall?”

“Yes; last autumn, as you say in England.”

“I beg your pardon.”

“My husband had died in the previous spring, so I wanted to knock about to cheer myself up and get lively again, and I went to Italy and France.”

“How delightful that must have been!”

“I can’t say it was. I did not care for them foreign places much. What is the use in staying among people that do not know one word of what you are saying, and only make frightful signs at you when they jabber away in their own tongue as if they sought to make themselves understood in that way. Not that they can help their language, poor things! but it always annoyed me, and I left the Continent, though some of the places were fine, to be sure; and they have plenty of art, my dear. They live for

art, and the money they can make out of travellers."

"And you got tired abroad?"

"I did, I assure you, and I made up my mind to come to England, though I was told it was dreadful slow and old-fashioned, and the people were that stand-off and knew nothing about surprise parties and hops; yet I rather like them, and intend to stay for some time."

She ran her hand through Capri's hair that shaded from dark to russet gold as it caught the light in falling through her fingers.

Then turning the conversation suddenly, she asked,

"How do you like my room?"

"It is beautiful," said Capri.

"It cost a pot of money, I can tell you," and she smiled, pleased and gratified by the girl's response.

"I suppose it did," answered Capri, trying to make a mental calculation of what the sum might amount to.

"There is a cabinet there I bought in Italy. It belonged to Catherine de' Medici: do you know about her?"

"A little."

"There is a statue in the ducal palace in Florence to Venus de' Medici, who was a shameless thing, for she is carved without anything to cover her, though a fine woman, I admit; but I never saw one of Catherine; there may be one in some of them galleries abroad, but they confuse one so with their queer names that no one can remember the half of them."

The cabinet that had belonged to Catherine de' Medici was a gem of ebony, inlaid with ivory marquetry. Capri rose to examine and stare at it with homage.

"I have never seen anything half so

lovely," said the girl under her breath, and she wondered how much it had cost, and thought that there must be no limit to Mrs. Lordson's wealth.

That lady smiled complacently.

"I have always had a taste in that way," she remarked in a cool self-satisfied manner. "You know, I adore art—I live for it," she went on, turning her eyes from the Korean jar to the costly porcelain lying on the brackets; "but I have something much finer to show you here."

She turned to a coffer, which Capri had not noticed before. It was shaped like an ancient sarcophagus, and quaintly carved exteriorly, but worn and almost black with age.

"It is not much to look at outside."

Mrs. Lordson opened the lid, and Capri uttered an exclamation of delight, and fell back a step or two reverentially. Inside,

on a background of rich crimson, were painted cherubs swinging wreaths of golden roses, and purple fruits, and yellow leaves; the fillets of the moulding were in dead gold, heavily ornamented with arabesques of palest pink, and bordered with a row of beading in dark green.

It was a gorgeous-looking piece of workmanship, a triumph of art.

"What do you think of that, my dear? There are some of your English connoisseurs would give one of their eyes for that. It formerly belonged to the Sechan collection. That will show them how I love art," she concluded triumphantly, for the good woman measured the beauty of art by the sum it cost her.

"It must have cost so much money," said Capri, looking up at her.

"Money!—I should think it did. I bought it at a great sale in Paris. An arch-

duke and a French marquis bid against me, but I carried it off in spite of them, for I had set my heart on having it, and have it I would, at any price ; but it did cost me some dollars," she replied, looking at Capri, who was duly impressed with her magnificence. "The girl is very beautiful," Mrs. Lordson thought, as her eyes turned towards her new acquaintance.

Capri stood in the subdued light, her dark hair contrasting the purity of her complexion, a look of wonder, mingled with longing, in her great eyes.

"She is like a picture," Mrs. Lordson said mentally, looking at her again, "or like one of them statues in the foreign galleries, only far more lovely, from the warm colour and life that lights her face."

"Do you sing?" the matron asked aloud presently, and she pointed to the open piano.

“ Yes,” the girl answered, without hesitation, going over to the instrument. “ What shall I sing you ?”

“ Anything you like, my dear. I am fond of music. I delight in it, for it is in itself an art, you know.”

Capri had never sat down to such a handsome instrument before. It had just come from the maker's hands, and was brilliant in its ornamentation of bright gold, the notes were white and stiff, and when she struck them they sounded deep, clear, and ringing. She sat down quietly, struck a few chords, and began Schubert's “ Song of Miriam ” in a voice at once plaintive and full of rich, tender melody. The sound rose higher and higher like a beseeching prayer, and then settled down into a subdued hush, so sweet, so low and lingering did the last note end.

Capri had insensibly the power of touch-

ing others by her voice ; it seemed to find an echo in the hearts of those who heard her, and stir within them their most subtle and best emotions.

When Capri had finished she left the piano, and, seating herself on the stool by Mrs. Lordson's feet, laid her head upon the matron's knees with a pretty child-like action, as if she were seeking for protection and love. Mrs. Lordson did not speak for some time. She laid her plump hand kindly upon the dark head and stroked it softly. The glossy hair was soft and silken to the touch, and the pale, clear face looked very gentle, and winning, and loveable just then.

"I suppose you have plenty of friends, Capri?" Mrs. Lordson commenced, after some time.

"Friends? No," said Capri, making no mention of her visits to Marcus Phillips' studio, or her occasional pleasant chats

with her father's pupils, who frequently were not only punctual to the hour fixed for their fencing lessons, but came half an hour in advance, to have a friendly gossip with her.

"No?"

"You see I live quite alone with Pa, and see very few persons—one cannot be too particular in a city. Pa is nearly always out, and I don't see much of him either, so I am left a good deal to myself," she said, finishing her words with a little sigh.

"That is not well for a young girl like you."

"Perhaps not; but I have always been used to it, and I do not much mind now."

After this Mrs. Lordson was silent again for some time, as if thinking, and kept stroking Capri's head gently meanwhile. Suddenly she said,

“Would you like to come and live with me?”

It was the question which all the time Capri had been hoping and praying she might ask her; a desire which she feared was too great a boon to have fulfilled, yet here were her wishes granted, her hopes gratified.

Capri felt her heart give a great throb, and she mentally acknowledged that fortune had been very good and gracious to her indeed.

“Dear Mrs. Lordson, I should be delighted,” she said, her eyes sparkling with pleasure at the mere prospect. “It is the one thing which I would most desire in life.”

“Well,” said the matron, “you see I live all by myself; and, though I shall probably go into society a good deal, yet I feel it lonely to have no one to speak to now and

then. I begin to feel dull, so I thought I would get a companion, and I took a fancy to you, my dear, when I saw you in that gallery."

"I am glad you did. It was a lucky visit for me," said Capri, raising her dark eyes to Mrs. Lordson's face.

"So, if you are willing, and your father satisfied, I will give you a hundred a year, and you can come and live with me as soon as you please."

Poor Capri could scarcely believe she was not dreaming. A hundred a year, and live in Mayfair, not in two or three rooms in a dingy road, noisy with the sound of cabs and busses, and a hundred distracting street cries, from early in the morning until late at night, but a house in an aristocratic quarter, and such a house too; it was like a prospect of Paradise.

If she were alone she would have jumped

for joy and danced about the room; the mere thought of the exchange almost overcame her. She was dazzled with the idea of living this new life; the full glory and benefit of the change flashed across her quick mind in a second, and made her breathless for a time.

“ Oh! dear Mrs. Lordson,” she said, when she had calmed herself sufficiently to give an answer, “ how can I thank you ?”

“ By coming to me as soon as you possibly can; that is, always providing the captain does not object.”

Capri remembered her father with a little chill. However, she resolved that nothing should prevent her accepting this wonderful offer. She had her way to gain in the world, and this would be the first step in the right direction. She made up her mind there and then that her father should

exercise no influence over her in this matter.

"I think Pa will not mind when he knows it will be for my advantage," she replied, though she entertained lurking doubts in that direction.

"Very good, Capri."

"To-day is Monday. I shall prepare and come to you on Saturday. Will that suit?"

"Yes, child, it will, if you cannot come sooner. But I suppose you want to make some preparations. Let it be on Saturday."

"Thank you."

"Oh! I almost forgot to ask you," she said suddenly, "if you know much about art."

"Yes," said Capri boldly, for she knew Mrs. Lordson could never sit in judgment on her in that direction.

“That is all right.”

“Mr. Phillips, who painted my picture, has taught me a good deal about art; and so has an old friend of mine, Signor Pallamari, who discovered some urns in Pompeii, and who knows every monument and statue in Rome; and he has talked of them to me over and over again until I fancy I know them all.”

“The girl will be a perfect treasure,” thought Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson, but she said aloud,

“I am glad of that, my dear. It is the duty of every one of us to have a good knowledge of art,” she went on in an eloquent tone. “It ennobles and raises our minds, you see—at least so I am told, and you know I adore art.”

“It is delightful,” said Capri, trying to keep the conversational ball rolling.

“Try to remember all about it, and

them statues and urns and things, and we shall have a talk over them all when we are together."

Capri resolved to gain as much information on the subject, and make the best use she could of old Pallamari's sources of knowledge, by becoming as familiar with the names and localities of statues and pictures as possible; she trusted the rest to her fertile imagination.

"Signor Pallamari," she said, for the title of courtesy sounded less familiar and better than the habitual "old" applied to her friend, "has lived half his life in art galleries and among artists; it is always a pleasure to me—one of the greatest pleasures—to listen to his explanations and anecdotes concerning art and artistic life."

Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson said she was glad of that; that to make art popular would be the object of her life, a scheme in

which she hoped Capri would aid her.

Capri readily declared it was the ambition of her life to make its true value known to the lower class ; she only longed to commence the good work at once.

The American was of opinion that in England it was not only the lower classes, but even the higher, and, if she might say so, even the educated classes, which required to become more familiar with the true principles of art, and it would be to them her exertions in the future would first appeal.

Capri was pleased to hear this ; so far as she could see, the class to whom Mrs. Lordson made reference thought too much of mere physical pleasures of life, leaving the higher, more ennobling pursuits to lie neglected.

Just then, when Mrs. Lordson had warmly expressed her approbation at the girl's

sentiments, they heard a loud ring and knock at the door, and Capri rose to depart.

“You need not stir, my dear, just yet; it’s Mr. Marrix, I think, I expect him at one o’clock,” and she consulted a little jewelled case watch the size of a florin.

In another moment Newton Marrix entered the room. The first thing Capri noticed was that he was carefully dressed, and looked remarkably bright and well.

“You did not expect to see Miss Dankers here, I suppose?” said Mrs. W. Achilles Lordson when the young author had shaken hands with them and sat down on an ottoman opposite.

“I scarcely expected such a pleasure.”

“Well, I asked her to call and see me this morning, and the result is that we like each other so well that we are going to live together in future. She will be my companion.”

"I offer my congratulations to you both," he said; "I am very glad."

"Well, that is pleasant," said Mrs. Lordson, as if it were a relief to her to find he had approved of her action.

"I have secured stalls at the Lyceum for Saturday night," he said. "There is a reproduction announced for that night, and all the best people will be there."

"You are very good," said the matron, delightedly.

"And Mrs. Stonex Stanning has asked me to leave you her card, and say she will be pleased to see you at her at homes on Thursday afternoons during the season."

He handed her the card which, as a special favour to himself, Mrs. Stonex Stanning had consented to let him have.

"My! How kind she is," said Mrs. Lordson. "You will call for me next Thursday, and we shall go."

Newton Marrix accepted the order and promised obedience.

"Mrs. Wilson Farrer, the authoress, will call on you on Wednesday and have lunch, and so will Count Bassano. I have asked both, using my *carte blanche*, and knowing you had no engagements for Wednesday."

"I am delighted."

"The count is a great connoisseur. I have told him of your coffer——"

"And the Medici cabinet?"

"Yes."

"La, I am so glad."

"So is the count?"

"And Mrs. Wilson Farrer, is she agreeable?"

"Most agreeable; but she does not care a straw for art."

"My! What a pity!"

"She only lives to write."

"I hope she won't put me into one of her novels."

"No danger of that."

"I am afraid of those people."

"Not of me?"

"Of course not."

"I must get some of her books to-morrow from the Grosvenor Library and read them before she comes; one always knows authors through their books, and besides," she added, turning to Capri with an air of superior wisdom, "it always flatters them to show by some reference that you are familiar with their writings and know some of their characters by name."

"You know our weak points," said Newton Marrix, smiling.

"I have studied human nature."

"Then be merciful in your judgments."

"I always am," said Mrs. Lordson with a gentle sigh. "By-the-way, does the count speak English?"

"He does."

"Well, that is pleasant. Have you asked anyone else to luncheon?"

"No, unless my friend Marcus Phillips; he knows the count."

"Very good. I shall be happy to see him."

Capri heard the artist's name mentioned with pleasure as among those who were to lunch, and thanked the author with a glance of her bright eyes which did not escape him. Marcus would see the house, and would be able to call on Mrs. Lordson and see her, Capri, at the same time, when she was settled as the matron's companion.

"Where do we go to-day?" Mrs. Lordson asked of her guide, philosopher, and friend.

"To Windsor. We shall start after luncheon."

Capri stood up to leave.

"Come, my dear, you must have some lunch before you go," and she took the girl's

arm and led her into the dining-room.

By the time she had finished she felt quite familiar with the place ; she was certain she would get on well at her new duties. Her spirits rose.

When she at length left, she went down the handsomely-carpeted steps with an air of perfect complacency. The page opened the door for her ; she passed out without seeming to perceive that miniature man, and with as much dignity as if she had been used to the attendance of pages all the days of her life.

The sense of a coming change was already upon her.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.





